

The Reverend Marjo Anderson

Easter 2 – Y PRAY, part 3: REJOICE

Is 35.1, 61.10 , Zeph 3:14-17, Hab 3.17-18 , Phil 4.4-7, Rom 5.3-5, 1 Thes 5.16-19

**11 April 2021
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“R Is for REJOICE”

This Lent delved into the subject of prayer.

We looked at the Y (why) of “Y PRAY?”, the P for Pause, and the A for Ask.

Today we’re going to look at the R for Rejoice

for Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

“Rejoice in the Lord always! Again, I say ‘Rejoice!’”

Rejoice! All through scripture we are commanded to rejoice.

It’s not simply an idea we’re supposed to consider; it’s not merely a suggestion; it’s not just a piece of advice. It’s a command!

“Dave, rejoice!” “Debby, rejoice!” “Mary, rejoice!” “Marjo, rejoice!”

“I don’t feel like rejoicing. I don’t want to rejoice. There’s nothing to rejoice about.”

But it doesn’t matter what I think or how I feel because it’s a command: Rejoice!

OK. So I’m supposed to rejoice. What does that mean?

To rejoice means to feel and to express joy.

And what is joy?

Well, let’s begin with what it is not.

It is not the same thing as happiness; happiness is one end of the binary happy/sad spectrum.

The feelings of happiness and sadness have to do with one’s mind.

If I have enough endorphins floating around in my mind, I’m happy; if I don’t, I’m sad.

If things in my life situation are to my liking, I’m happy; if they are not, I’m sad.

If it’s a gorgeous sunny day outside, I’m happy; if it’s raining when I want to have a picnic, I’m sad.

If I have plenty of food to eat, I’m happy; if there’s nothing in my cupboards and I’m hungry, I’m sad.

If I have a comfortable home to live in, I’m happy; if I’ve been evicted, I’m sad.

Happiness arises in the mind due to a physical reaction of brain chemistry

or to an emotional response to the circumstances, situations and scenarios of our lives.

Happiness has to do with thoughts and feelings, with the mind and the heart,

with the intellectual and emotional aspects of ourselves.

But joy has nothing to do with body, mind or heart.

Joy has nothing to do with our physical or mental or emotional selves.

Joy has nothing to do with what is going on in the circumstances, situations, and scenarios of our lives.

Joy arises and is experienced on a spiritual level.

Now without going into a whole dissertation

on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of human identity,

let me offer a quick, simplified explanation.

You are a spiritual being that manifests in a physical, material way.

When you come into this world your spiritual self is huge

and your brain, your mind, your ego is small and primitive and amorphous.

But as you grow, your mind and your ego and your egoic identity gets much larger and more defined.

You begin to define yourself by such things as gender, race, country, religion, political party, and profession

until it begins to overshadow your spirit, weighing it down, crushing it, squashing it.

And pretty soon we even forget about our spirit

and we begin thinking that we are only our body and mind and heart.

But those things are only the surface of the vast ocean that is our spirit.

Our body, mind, and heart are only the reflection of our shining spirit.

There is a you that is more than you know – that is more than your body

with its particular height and weight and shape and its unique skin and hair and facial features.

There is a you that is more than your mind – the labels that you use to describe yourself –
more than your gender or race or political party or age or sexual orientation or physical or emotional ability,
more than your personality with its thoughts and beliefs and memories.

There is a you that is more than your heart – more than your feelings
and more than your dreams and desires and fears and failures.

There is a you that remains untouched by the hurts and pains of the past.

There is a you that remains unconcerned by any anxiety or uncertainty over the future.

There is a you that is pure spirit, pure energy, pure God-essence, a you that shimmers and shines and sparkles.

And it's in that spirit part of you that the gifts of the Spirit reside –
gifts of love & joy, peace & patience, goodness & kindness, gentleness & faithfulness & self control –
gifts that are not dependent upon any circumstance or situation in your life,
or any thoughts your mind has or any feelings your heart has about those circumstances.

It is within your spirit that joy arises and bubbles up and overflows –
the same kind of joy that makes babies giggle and toddlers dance and children skip,
the same kind of joy that pours through a poet's pen,
or sounds through a singer's soul, or roars through a runner's race.

So how do you get in touch with that part of you?

How can you access the joy that is in you? How you feel that joy?

You do it by letting go of the past and the future and entering the NOW.

You do it by letting go of everything you think you are –
all the labels, all the identities, all the things that you are used to using to define you.

You do it by letting go of everything that has happened in the past that still stands between you and God –
all of the hurt & pain & anger & grief & failure & blame & resentment & unforgiveness & the need to be right.

You do it by letting go of everything that might happen in the future that stands between you and God –
all of the fear and anxiety and doubt and despair.

You let go of all that has been and all that is to be, you let go of all that you think and all that you feel,
you let go of all the things that you think you are, are the things you are clinging to,
all the things that you have, and there you are – your true self.

And it is there in that moment that you are in the fullness of God's presence
with nothing at all between you and God that you encounter joy.

And when you experience that joy, when you feel that joy, when that joy fills your being,
it is a joy that no one can ever take from you.

It is a joy that fills you with gratitude for each breath that you take and for every beat of your heart,
a joy that makes you thankful for everything you can see or hear or smell or taste or touch,
a joy that is appreciative of every moment of every day of every week and month and year,
a joy in which the challenges of the moment are transformed into opportunities,
and pain becomes the path to healing, and despair is driven away by dream's arrival.

And when you reconnect with that joy that lives in your spirit,
you won't have to decide whether or not to share it – you won't be able to hide it.

God does not command us to be happy. There will be times when we will be anything but –
times when we'll be anxious, angry, disappointed, disillusioned, depressed, despairing, fearful, lonely,
grief-stricken, heartbroken, sad, scared, resentful, vengeful, or any number of other negative emotions.

Those have to do with the circumstances of our lives.

And it is exactly because God knows that we will experience challenges and negative reactions
that God commands us to rejoice, because rejoicing brings us back to our true spirit selves
where we can connect with God, experience God's power and love, and be filled with joy.

May God lead you to your truest, most beautiful, most perfect self,
where you will be able to feel the joy of the Lord and be unable to keep it inside.

Rejoice always! And again I say, Rejoice!

For Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia! Amen!