

MAIN POINT

The birth of Christ gives us reason for joy in every circumstance.

INTRODUCTION

What time in your life would you say was the most joyful? Do you think you will ever experience joy to that degree again? Why or why not?

Who is the most consistently joyful person you know? What about that person makes him or her that way?

Most everyone in the world is seeking after happiness in one way or another. The problem with happiness, though, is that it's built on circumstance. And all circumstances are just a moment from changing. God has something far deeper in mind for the Christian. When we look to God rather than our circumstances for our joy, we will not only find what true joy is, but also peace that surpasses understanding.

DISCUSSION

> READ PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9.

Considering Paul's situation, does it seem strange to you that he would say "rejoice ... always"? Explain.

What does "the Lord is at hand" have to do with choosing joy?

How might this be applied to the season of Advent?

Why do you think Paul said "rejoice" twice in the same sentence? How can you rejoice when you don't feel like it? What does that look like?

Can you do verse 6a, "do not be anxious about anything," without doing verse 6b, "let your requests be made known to God"? Explain your thoughts.

Similarly, can you have verse 7, "the peace of God...will guard your hearts and your minds" without doing verse 6b, "let your requests be made known to God"? Explain.

How does thanksgiving in prayer counteract worry?

If you were to take verse 8 literally and seriously, what things would you need to cut out of your life?

What was Paul saying about himself in verse 9? About God? About you?

Name three practical ways you can live out verse 8. Name one person you know whose life you should seek to imitate in order to choose joy in your outlook on life.

APPLICATION

What are some reasons you have to rejoice in the Lord that do not depend on your circumstances? How can you focus on those in this season?