

“Rejoice, Think Good Thoughts and Love”

Philippians 4:4-9

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PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING Gracious God please help us understand and live your grace. Open our hearts to love as you love. Amen

Everyone is called to “work in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment, caring for God’s creation.” Another word for justice is righteousness. Righteousness is being in right, loving, peaceful, free, caring relationship with everyone, God and creation, yielding fulfillment for all. A definition for faith is loving relationship. Therefore, a person of faith is someone striving to be in loving, just, right relationships.

The Apostle Paul was told that there was a disagreement between two people in the Philippian church. Different perspectives, views, and mild conflict are healthy and facilitate understanding, love, and transformation when shared in nonanxious, peaceful ways. This disagreement was toxic. Paul models an important distinction. There is no such thing as a toxic person. There is toxic behavior. First Paul tells us to rejoice. Every moment is a gift of God, even during hostility we can rejoice and be glad. Rejoice, there is goodness in everyone. Rejoice, God’s grace will purify revealing goodness beyond our grandest imagination. Rejoice, be considerate, caring, and strive to listen so you can understand another’s perspective. Rejoice, do not worry. Rejoice, avoid stewing over a disagreement. Rejoice, stop your mind from fabricating a snowballing list of imagined ways that another is trying to hurt you. Rejoice, be non-anxious, calm, and an active listener who is perceiving to understand. Rejoice and pray, then peace will come, fellowship, community, and loving relationships will be restored. We are all called to rejoice and be at peace with all people. Everyone is called to rejoice and “work in the world for peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment, caring for God’s creation.”

Philippians 4:4-9 NLT “Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again—rejoice! Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need and thank God for all God has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. God’s peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. And now, dear siblings, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing.”

The Apostle Paul urges us to rejoice in the Lord, to pray with both requests and thanksgiving and then, to let our minds dwell on “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable and anything worthy of praise. Prayer is a way God calls and transforms us bringing to fruition our requests. The Apostle Paul identifies two steps, thinking and doing. We are to fill our minds with good thoughts and put those thoughts into action. More specifically when we disagree with someone we are to think about their goodness and affirm their goodness while we debate the issue. We are called to pray for and serve everyone with energy, intelligence, imagination and love. We are called to love everyone and reconcile the world. We are called to make tangible in our daily life God’s love and God’s redeeming grace freely given to all people. Our calling should be a joy, for each of us is a gifted child of God created to expand the love of the cosmos forever. God chooses you. God gives all of us the privilege of serving to bring heaven to earth. We are to rejoice in our opportunities to proclaim God’s good news in thought, word, and deed.

What efforts will you make to think about things that are true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable and worthy of praise? How will you put these thoughts into action?

As a church our good thoughts and loving actions are multiplied supernaturally by God creating a world of caring, peace, justice, freedom, and human fulfillment for all; a cosmos where all are free to rejoice. Amen