



12.23-24.2018

ADVENT – Sermon 5 | Philippians 4 – The secret to Christmas

Good morning. My name is Spence and I am one of the pastors here at Mercy Church. And I want to say Merry Christmas to you! I don't know about you but I feel like Christmas has really snuck up on our family this year. I went out yesterday to get started on my shopping...cause I missed the "shipping" deadline. People be shopping. 2018 is predicted to be the biggest spending year yet as people buy presents for people and food & decorations for their traditional events.

- Consumers will spend over \$1Trillion this year in the U.S. on Christmas. Tell me if any of these shopping trends apply to you:
- Over \$5million of that will be spent on Pets. So your dog isn't alone.
- The average consumer will spend \$100 on THEMSELVES while shopping for others.
- 21% of shoppers will do ALL their shopping from a mobile device
- 45% of buyers say they plan on doing their holiday shopping at the grocery store. Show of hands. *FYI you last minuters – there is a food lion literally 100 yards from where you are sitting right now.*

Look I'm on that list in a couple of places, that's all I'll say. We love Christmas in our family. We, like I'm sure you do, have some things we do that have become traditions in our family. Do any of you have those traditions that you didn't realize were weird until you grew up and met others and realized wait...nobody else does this?

- My kids are DEFINITELY going to say that. – Every Christmas Eve we watch Claymation Christmas. Not the one with Rudolph, the snowman, & the elf & island of misfit toys. No we watch Will Vinton's Claymation Christmas where 2 dinosaurs emcee a concert where quasimoto directs the carol of the bells and the California raisins sing the closing number. Now that was made in 1987. And I watched it growing up and my wife in her kindness has let me pass this weird tradition down to my kids. We've got others but that one I just know, from personal experience, they are going to be alone in.

Those traditions....even silly ones...bring comfort don't they? That's why we spend \$ and why we are so committed to them. They are familiar and we connect them to the season and to something we hold really near and dear. Who knows for some of you coming to church may be one of those. Whatever those traditions are they give you a little short burst of of peace & joy. But not sustaining joy right. Like I don't expect my kids to hit a rough patch in their mid-20s and say "it's gonna be ok because on Christmas EVE there will be two Claymation dinosaurs that will provide all the soul strengthening joy I need for the rest of the year."

Obviously. These things are small, momentary comforts. How many people are deeply attached to all of their Christmas presents from 4 years ago? they don't last. Some of you are having a *hard* Christmas this year because somebody is missing who was a part of your traditions. Or maybe you've moved and things have changed. And the absence makes what once was comforting actually pretty challenging.

Well today, to celebrate Christmas, we are going to talk about Peace and Joy. But we are going to talk about The source of it. Things and traditions can't be *the source* of joy for you. They will never be big enough or last long enough.

Jonathan Edwards - They are like rays of sunshine giving you temporary warmth. You follow the ray up and you get the source, the sun itself. See what I want you to see today is the good blessings you've had in your life are the rays – God's love is the Sun.

If you are new to Mercy Church, we've been spending the Christmas season walking through the book of Philippians in the New Testament. Because in this letter you've got a guy who was writing from prison, where he was put unjustly and his life had been filled with some hard circumstances...yet he is brimming over with Joy. Because he's figured out the secret to having joy that is stronger than any circumstance he will face. And that secret is the key to Christmas. Paul wasn't just giving them an idea, he was relaying what had carried him through some hard stuff.

12I know both how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content — whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. 13I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me. --
Philippians 4:12-13

In verse 13 He summarizes the secret of being content...of having Joy in times of abundance & need. Which by the way: we often think we only need "contentment" when we are in times of need. But it seems that people who have a lot of stuff...often have a lot of stress. The 20th century american philosopher Christopher George Wallace summarized this reality better than anybody...you know him as Notorious B.I.G. What did he say? "More money, more problems." Paul knew abundance creates stress and anxiety just like need does. So he says there is only one thing that can carry him through all that.

And then his *summary* to his secret is: Christ. It's the summary of every Christian in here. What fuels my life? What carries me? In a word...Christ. And I hope that's what you leave here with today. The strength of Christ. Now a few verses earlier he *explains* this secret and how it works in your life and mine.

I want to show you the secret to peace & joy. And we are going to start in verse 4.
4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Paul says "Rejoice in THE LORD." Confusing, but if I substituted anything for "the Lord" it would make sense! Rejoice in... the new job. The fact that she's actually into you! That you made the team. Then it would make sense. But the word "always" can only go with "The Lord." Paul is saying nothing else can provide constant joy for you. **See the secret to joy is what you place it in.**

When my oldest son Zeke was only 3 or 4 years old, he had a HUGE love for the Pixar movie CARS. Lightning McQueen and Doc Hudson...they were everywhere in our house. All the time. Well, Christmas time rolls around and we put out a little toy nativity set so we can teach Zeke the story.

Well one day we found a pretty disturbing crime scene at the nativity. Toy baby Jesus had been discarded, kicked out of the manger. And sitting in the place of Jesus...right there in between Mary & Joseph...was Doc Hudson. (SHOW PIC – Doc Hudson Replaced Jesus)

This is the BEST isn't it? Because this 4 year old did in a very obvious way what everyone does in their hearts. We put something else in the manger and we rejoice in it. Problem is nothing else is strong enough to keep up with our need for joy.

Rejoice in test score...but another test is coming. Rejoice she's into you...but some day she's gonna disappoint you. There is only one thing you can rejoice in...rejoicing is joy being activated in your heart and expressing itself in celebration. There's only one thing you can always rejoice in...and that's the Lord. So a light hearted way to ask a very important question: What is your Doc Hudson? You'll never have real peace & joy until you get Doc out of the manger! And verse 5 clues you in on what it means to rejoice in the Lord.

5 Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

People who rejoice in the Lord are not proud, not arrogant, not thrill seekers...no they are gracious to everyone. Why? Because when Paul says rejoice in the Lord he's saying rejoice in a God who was given to us *as a gift*. That's the mystery and wonder of Christmas. Matthew 1:

20 But after he had considered these things, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, don't be afraid to take Mary as your wife, because what has been conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: 23 See, the virgin will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and they will name him Immanuel, which is translated "God is with us."

The message of Christmas that sets Christianity apart from all other religions is that God, the one true God, The God so powerful he created the universe with his words, The God outside of Time, The God who knows how many hairs on your head and who hears your every thought, That God became Immanuel. He came to be with us. That's who Jesus is. The God of the universe who came to us. We didn't deserve him, he came because he loves us.

And that love was so powerful he would make a way to usher in forgiveness from sin for all who desired it. The gift is more than just his presence for 33 years on earth. The gift is something we desperately need. It's forgiveness from our sin and reconciliation to the God we sinned against.

Christmas only makes sense if Good Friday and Easter Sunday are on the near horizon. On Good Friday Jesus, God in human form, went up on a cross to pay for your sin and mine. The gift is

that he took our place and so we don't have to pay for our sins! And then, the bible tells us he got out of the grave. Which is where power, unlike anything else in the universe, is available to humans.

The rest of the bible tells us that people who believe this are new creations. The old person is dead...metaphorically in the tomb because Christ died for you. You are a new creation because Christ got out of the grave. And then, the bible tells us God himself, his Spirit, now resides in every Christ follower. That's why Paul says... the Lord IS near. Not the Lord WAS near.

5 Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

There is a promise for you to leave here with today. Paul is writing 30 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. Yet the Lord is still near. Because Jesus said when he left he'd send the Spirit to live in each follower of Christ and guide us. God is still IMMANUEL! He is still with Christians!!

And so Christians if God is with us, his power is with us too! Old temptations...the power of God breaks them. Old escape patterns that used to have such a strong almost magnetic pull...the power of God is stronger than them. Old hurts that used to send you spiraling, the power of God can heal you from them!

We talked about last week and how the presence of God with us...creates a joy that is spiritual buoyancy in the life of the Christian.

Just like anyone else, Christians get knocked down by life sometimes...but the joy of the Lord, given to us by the spirit of God inside of us...floats us. It pulls us back up when life knocks us under the water. Listen personally, I lost my grandfather, and my father-in-law this year. I didn't think 2018 was going to be filled with that kind of pain. It feels like we've been knocked under water. And I know some of you are in here with real deep hurt. Maybe it's from your own doing or just something that happened to you. Either way, you can either allow the strength of the Lord to lift you, or you can sink. And when you sink you'll know it because you'll walk around in bitterness, despair, and anger. You don't have to settle for that. You don't have to "pull yourself out of that." NO! You need to hear the promise of Christmas. God is near! He is with us. And he came to be with us because he loves you & he wants you!

And listen...the more experiences you have where you choose Christ in the hard moments...the more you'll experience HIS strength. And listen...right after Paul says the Lord is near, he gives you a very, very practical example that pretty much all of us can relate to:

6 Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Now don't you love this? Do I have anybody else in the room who worries about stuff? Another way to translate that is to not be anxious about anything. Ya'll I struggle with that for real. Have for years. Like...I'm always worse case scenario-ing things. Anybody else? I'm not an official hypochondriac. I would get counseling to find out if I am but I'm too worried about what the counselor would say. SO...what is the single WORST thing to say to someone who struggles with worry & anxiety? DON'T WORRY! Now, I'm worried about not worrying. You've just piled it on.

So he says well...you can't just "Not Worry" you've got to put your worry somewhere. You can't just Rejoice aimlessly. Like "Don't worry, be happy." The problem with don't worry, be happy is that you need to be happy *about* something for the happiness to outweigh the worry.

So the mental energy you were about to spend on worrying...instead present your requests to God! Every instinct you have to worry...pray! And very important he tells you how to pray...WITH THANKSGIVING.

See the Christian is ALREADY thankful for Immanuel. This is where our faith gets so practical. The promise of Christmas...that the Lord is near...it is true every moment for the Christian. So we don't come to God like he's a genie to fix our problems. We come to God celebrating the gospel...that he has already fixed our greatest problem. He has already met our greatest need! So in the moment of worry the gospel says "WAIT....Wait just a second there soul." God has saved me! AND that God who saved me...surely didn't save me to forget me now here in this moment. He's with me. The sovereign God of the universe is with me. And he tells me he will never leave me or forsake me. Worry comes from fear of the future yet for the christian...the future is certain. GOD loves me, he has saved me, he is with me, one day I WILL be in heaven with him, and he is working for my good. Now I may not understand him...Surely I don't.

But Christmas tells me the sovereign God gave his son for me. That is love...that brings peace and joy. And when you confront your worry with that great truth.... Paul says

7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Here's what Christmas promises: A peace so powerful, so comforting, so intimate to each of us...that it surpasses understanding. And that peace will guard you. Isn't that comforting? Peace is the steadiness of the soul.

Where do you get peace? All your requests have to be presented with thanksgiving. Now how can you present your requests with thanksgiving? You haven't received what you are requesting yet. Well this is actually the key..."God, whatever you do in response to this request...it is good. And I thank you for it. So whether it comes or not. Whether it comes WHEN I want or not...I thank you. I know it is for my good." **To thank God before you get it is the secret to peace in a weary world.**

Peace of God – confidence & trust in God's wise & good control of your life.

Life feels like it attacks you sometimes doesn't it? And when it does...the peace of GOD will guard you. This is different than peace *with* God. peace with God is what Christ gives you in Christ. The gospel says because of our sin we are all enemies of God. Rebels who have rejected his authority. And becoming a Christian is believing Christ took our punishment so now we can come back to our king...lay our weapons down...and be at peace with God. Then the peace OF God becomes a frame of heart. Confidence in God that is solid and unchanging. Confidence & stability no matter what.

This is the secret. The secret to face Christmas this year. Are you in abundance? Oh how easy it is to worry about everything you have. Are you in need? How easy to fear God has forgotten you. How easy it is to throw your hands up and shake them at God. Are you hurting? How easy to sink under all that pain.

And into all of that God says...look at Christmas. Seen it before? Look closer. Christmas is the announcement that his rescue mission is set in motion. This is why Isaac Watts wrote the hymn Joy To the World. Because the Lord God has come for us. To rescue us from our deepest need.

How do you activate this peace and joy? Because maybe you are saying “Spence I don’t FEEL like the Lord is near.” Humbly let me say...SO what!?! Do you think you need to feel it for it to be true? I mean have you ever FELT SO SURE you were right about something only to discover it wasn’t true? Happens to me often in the car. Use GPS...nah this feels right. Well...you can feel like you are going the right way. But if you turn on the wrong road, it doesn’t matter how much you FEEL like its right does it? No. because truth isn’t based on your feelings.

See you’ve got a real decision to make. Your feelings don’t determine truth. JESUS determines truth. **You don’t feel your way into your beliefs, you believe your way into your feelings.**

Which means you are going to need to stop listening to your heart and start talking to it. Psalm 42 the Psalmist says Why are you cast down oh my soul? I will say to my soul “Hope in God!”

The psalmist says listen right now in this moment I need to stop listening to my emotions and start talking to them. And that’s what Christmas is doing. Its putting the peace and joy of God back in front of you and saying REJOICE!! Rejoice in the Lord...TODAY!

So here’s where we sit. Two questions: Do you believe Christmas is what the bible says it is? The second question is one we ask a lot around here because sometimes in the bible belt you can be just familiar enough with Christian traditions to be inoculated to their real meaning. The first question: do you believe the promise of Christmas? And second: do you really?

The gospel of Christmas...good news of great joy...it promises you more than you could imagine. Peace beyond understanding. Joy that even the deepest of hurts cannot sink. Eternal security. Purpose and direction for life.

But it will also cost you more than you thought. It requires you surrendering the things you were rejoicing in. The things you find your value in. And saying I will yield my control of my life to the one who died for me. I will lay it all down and now he’s in charge. That’s no small step. But as one who did that 20 years ago and am still experiencing that hope and peace fresh today...I promise you its worth it.

Close.

THE BENCH

Jonathan Edwards

“God is better than fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of any, or all earthly friends. These are but shadows; but the enjoyment of God is the substance. These are but scattered beams; but God is the sun. These are but streams; but God is the fountain. These are but drops, but God is the ocean.” - Edwards

- Rejoice in the Lord always...Rejoice! The posture of the Christian is Rejoicing in the Lord. Not just Rejoicing aimlessly. Like “Don’t worry, be happy.” The problem with don’t worry, be happy is that you need to be happy *about* something for the happiness to outweigh the worry.
- The Lord is Near – “Spence I don’t FEEL like the Lord is near.” SO! Do you think you need to feel it for it to be true? I can FEEL like a _____, Doesn’t mean it’s true. I mean have you ever FELT SO SURE you were right about something only to discover it wasn’t true? Just recently I was See you’ve got a real decision to make. Your feelings don’t determine truth. JESUS determines truth. You don’t feel your way into your beliefs, you believe your way into your feelings.
- /
- Paul says “Rejoice in THE LORD.” Confusing, but if I substituted anything for “the Lord” it would make sense! Rejoice in... the new job. The fact that she’s into you! That you made the team. **(jd) But always can only go with “the Lord.”**
- Peace – the steadiness of the soul. Confidence & trust in God’s wise & good control of your life. opposite is anxiety.
 - Where do you get peace?
 - All your requests have to be presented with thanksgiving. Now how can you present your requests with thanksgiving? You haven’t received what you are requesting yet. Well this is actually the key...”God, whatever you do in response to this request...it is good. And I thank you for it. So whether it comes or not. Whether it comes WHEN I want or not...I thank you. I know it is for my good.” To thank God before you get it is the secret.
 - Romans 5.1 – Peace with God.
 - Diff between peace of God and peace with God. They are distinct but not separate. Peace OF God is a frame of heart. Confidence in God that is solid and unchanging. Confidence & stability no matter what.
 - Counterfeit of peace is cynicism. An apathy that hardens your own heart. LOOKS like you have peace but...it actually exists by itself. This false peace doesn’t have the other fruits of the spirit. They don’t have love and joy and sensitivity and compassion. Only the spirit of God can create all these things at once.
 - Mary v Martha – Mary has ONE thing. Martha has a million things. The opposite of anxiety is single-mindedness.
 - How do you cultivate peace?
 - V.8-9. Peace comes from the same place Joy comes from.

- Psalm 42 – you can either listen to your heart or talk to your heart.
 - Why are you cast down oh my soul? And why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God! for I shall again praise him; my salvation and my God.
- Peace comes from talking to your heart about who you are in Christ

8 Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable — if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy — dwell on these things. 9 Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

10I rejoiced in the Lord greatly because once again you renewed your care for me. You were, in fact, concerned about me but lacked the opportunity to show it. 11I don't say this out of need, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I find myself. 12I know both how to make do with little, and I know how to make do with a lot. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being content — whether well fed or hungry, whether in abundance or in need. 13I am able to do all things through him who strengthens me -- Philippians 4:1-13 (CSB)

The Bench

Paisley: guards her blocks (idols) with her body from Stella. She has all she thinks she wants, but she is sad, alone and afraid (anxious). Just like us. (Matt Papa)

- Anxiety comes from when one of your gods collapses. (Matt Papa)

Martin Luther understood that worry is a form of ruling the world yourself, instead of letting God rule. When you are really worried, you know know exactly the world ought to be going and are sure that God is not going to get it right. You are overwhelmed with worry and anxiety because if you were ruling the world - which you're not - you'd know just how everything ought to be going. But how do you know how the world ought to be? Martin Luther's friend Philipp Melancthon was a terrible worrier. Luther didn't tell Philipp "stop worrying." Instead, Luther said "let Philipp cease to rule the world." You have to stop trying to rule the world. You can't worry and let God be King. (Keller)

The iguana can look at two different things, one with each eye, focusing on each... we can't ever do that. if you know someone who can, it's FREAKY. *You cannot worry and worship at the same time.*

We r unavoidably & irreducibly hope-based creatures; we r controlled how we live now by what we think will happen later **Keller**

See Driscoll sermon notes on Philippians 4:1-9 on anxiety

See notes on **Phil 4:4** Andy Stanley, “He’s Still* Got the Whole World in His Hands”, pt 2

- “How does recession affect a church? More people, less money. When you get worried, you go back to God.”

- **Illus.** The US Airways flight that crashed in the Hudson... saw an interview with the crew. To flight attendant: what was it like? “Very quiet. People praying.” Probably took no announcement, (jd) “The captain has turned on the fasten seat belt sign. Please return to your seat for an time of unprecedented supplication.” People naturally start counting stuff, reciting stuff, rubbing stuff.
- When you are on a flight and it hits turbulence (you pilots in here bear with us for us rookies that don’t like turbulence as much as you)... you start confessing everything, getting right with God, forgiving everyone... devil himself could tempt you and you’d say “no...”
- How do you act when things go wrong? When calls don’t come back. When it doesn’t look like you’ll get the scholarship or make the team?
- Paul says “Rejoice in THE LORD.” Confusing, but if I substituted anything for “the Lord” it would make sense! Rejoice in... the new job. The fact that she’s into you! That you made the team. **(jd) But always can only go with “the Lord.”**

Tony Woodlief:... As Oswald Chambers noted, Christ promised deliverance in trouble. Perhaps He said not to worry because it constructs a future where He is absent. **We imagine the suffering ahead, and not His comfort in the midst of it.** We forget to commune with Him here, so deluded as we are by an imaginary there in which He is indifferent. (jd) Tomorrow has trouble of its own, and the same God of grace will be there that is there today!

Ortberg, *God is Closer than You Think*, Ch. 4 “The Greatest Moment of Your Life”

- Management is represented by Pharaoh, he’s a hard line negotiator. God gives Moses powerful playing cards: 10 plagues.
- We think of day starting at sun-up. For the ancient Heb’s it was different. Day started at sun-down. He starts working while I’m asleep. Reminded them that this is *God’s day*. The world is already spinning. (when you are a guest and you sleep late and don’t worry because God is in control!) 73 – Eugene Peterson. We have to force ourselves to let go “at the end.” Start your day with God in control!

j.d.: “I’ve read several places, including from some pastors, that one way to handle worry is to set aside 10 minutes every day just to worry. Then, whenever a situation arises, you can put it off until that 10 minutes when you do all your worrying. I used to think that was ridiculous, like saying that for 10 minutes a day you’ll intentionally sin. But then I realized I was already doing that, in one form, with my prayer time. Anytime something popped in mind which causes me stress, I say, “I’ll pray about that tonight in my prayer time at 10:00. That’s all I can do for right now.” So, don’t set aside 10 minutes to worry, but do limit the expression of your worries to your prayer times where they can be greeted with faith.”

“Worry is trying to deal with tomorrow’s problems in today’s pastures.” Ray Vander Laan, “The Good Shepherd,” in *Echoes of His Presence*.

Most common command in Scripture: “Do not fear”, 366x in Scripture, one for each day, and on leap year.

Often when fear not is used it is because, in context, God’s grace has been revealed, and there is no reason to fear then.

“When I am experiencing anxiety, the root is, you are trying to be self-sufficient. I am acting independent of God.”

Keller: “Stress Management”

1 [Anxiety](#) 6/1/91 Dr. Timothy J. Keller 2 [Anxiety](#) 6/1/91 Dr. Timothy J. Keller 3
[Pressure](#) 6/2/91 Dr. Timothy J. Keller 4 [Pressure](#) 6/2/91 Dr. Timothy J. Keller 5
[Loss](#) 6/3/91 Dr. Timothy J. Keller 6 [Loss](#) 6/3/91 Dr. Timothy J. Keller 7
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Illustration:

Wallace Johnson was the founder of Holiday Inn, and a dynamic Christian. When he was 40 years old, his boss fired him from his saw mill job. It came as a devastating shock. This was during the Great Depression. He and his wife needed the income from his job, small though it was. Wallace felt that the world had caved in on him.

His wife worried. She asked him, “What are you going to do?” But Wallace had been thinking, and he answered by saying, “I’m going to mortgage our home and go into the building business.

His first venture was the construction of two small buildings. Within five years, Wallace Johnson was a multi-millionaire. In an interview, he said, “Today, if I could locate the man who fired me I would sincerely thank him for what he did. At the time it happened, I didn't understand why I was fired. Later I saw that it was God's unerring and wondrous plan to get me into the ways of his choosing.”

The greatest thing that ever happened to him was to get fired.

Who knows what God might do through your problems and disappointments! If you’ve got problems, be happy. Don’t think of your problems as intruders. Welcome them as friends. God's purpose is much bigger than those problems. Don't doubt.

Keller on Philippians 4.4-9

Opening: We are going to talk about peace & joy. Pretty great right!?

Intro: Want to talk about the roadblocks to peace & joy (they were in a fruit of the spirit convo)

- Story: two taxi’s ram each other, and then to the passenger’s surprise the two taxi drivers just move on. “Eh well, had an accident.” Neither got out or exchanged info. No other two people would do that. Why did taxi drivers do that? Expectations.
- Your expectations of having people in your face, of having accidents...you just expect to be jostled around.
- So many new Yorkers are from somewhere else, they have wrong expectations about life in NYC. Which is why NYC is so hard for everyone.

- C.S. Lewis – expectations are everything. Before going into a room: If I say it’s a honeymoon suite, you walk in and are disappointed...same room but I say “it’s a jail cell” and you are pleasantly surprised.

A lot of Christians struggle to find peace and joy because their expectations aren’t right. The Christian has more enemies than when they were non Christians.

- When you were a non-christian you had one enemy. God. Now god is a mighty, wonderful adversary because he is trying to save you. We are rebelling against him.
- But the minute you make peace with God...instantly all of God’s enemies declare war on you. And they are not nice enemies. As a non-christian, your enemy was a good guy. But as a Christian, your enemies are bad guys: the world, the flesh, & the devil
- If your expectations are off at all, you will get mauled. If you overestimate the enemy you will retreat and lose. If you underestimate the enemy, you will not be ready for his attack and you will lose.
 - Example: Switzerland. Neutral in WWII. If they were to pick a side...instantly they would have enemies.
- If you are a Christian, you have enemies! They can’t take you from God, but they can steal all of your peace and joy.
- This sermon – think of it like a sobering sermon. Like smelling salts. Not pleasant, but you need it.
 - From last week: JOY is a spiritual buoyancy that comes when we are rejoicing in God. – we are unsinkable even though we are pushed down. And that buoyancy comes from our unchanging position with God. Our joy doesn’t mean we don’t suffer...it just means we can’t be destroyed by it.
 - The bible is talking a lot about how you can be joyful when you are sad. There is a big difference between joy & happiness. Happiness comes from having the things you want. Joy though...joy comes from saying “I have the only thing that really matters.”
- Happiness rests in the blessings, Joy rests in the blesser.
 - The opposite of Joy is hopelessness. It’s having nothing to rest in. Ps 37.4 – I have more joy than when their wine is full & corn abounds...their joy only comes when stocks are up.
- We should be experts in joy but we are scared. We focus on the blessings instead of the blessers.
- Peace – the steadiness of the soul. Confidence & trust in God’s wise & good control of your life. opposite is anxiety.
 - Where do you get peace?
 - All your requests have to be presented with thanksgiving. Now how can you present your requests with thanksgiving? You haven’t received what you are requesting yet. Well this is actually the key...”God, whatever you do in response to this request...it is good. And I thank you for it. So whether it comes or not. Whether it comes WHEN I want or not...I thank you. I know it is for my good.” To thank God before you get it is the secret.

- Romans 5.1 – Peace *with* God. “Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. -- Romans 5:1 (CSB)”
- Diff between peace of God and peace with God. They are distinct but not separate. Peace OF God is a frame of heart. Confidence in God that is solid and unchanging. Confidence & stability no matter what.
- Counterfeit of peace is cynicism. An apathy that hardens your own heart. LOOKS like you have peace but...it actually exists by itself. This false peace doesn't have the other fruits of the spirit. They don't have love and joy and sensitivity and compassion. Only the spirit of God can create all these things at once.
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 - Peace comes from talking to your heart about who you are in Christ
- Enemies
 - World – a mindset of secularism. Secular means “now.” Worldliness is a mindset that says the “here and now” is what matters.
 - Flesh – the selfish part of you that wants to be god. not the body...it's the desire to be god.

[1] So then, my dearly loved and longed for brothers and sisters, my joy and crown, in this manner stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.

2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to agree in the Lord. 3 Yes, I also ask you, true partner, to help these women who have contended for the gospel at my side, along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers whose names are in the book of life.

- Eudia & Syntyche – two well known women in the church who were in a personal disagreement.
- This letter was being read to the whole church. This clearly must have been a serious issue threatening real division in the church. Or he wouldn't have put it in here. It's the same rendering “agree in the lord” that Paul used in 2.2 to refer to how the church should be unified. Really, the occasion for this letter may be this interaction
- When these two women agree...IN THE LORD...when their common bond in the lord becomes central, then their attitude towards one another will be the same as Christ expressed on the way to the Cross...considering others more important than himself. Servant-like.
- We've fought together for the gospel...don't let this disunity tear apart what we fought so hard to build. Remember Christ!!

(I may just leave this section (vv1-3) out. Could be a distraction from the point)

And my form of worry is worst-case scenarioing everything. If you've been around Mercy I've told you this before. I'm always gaming the worst case scenario and then worrying about it. You know the game 6 degrees of Kevin Bacon? Like every person you know is 6 degrees of relationship away from knowing Kevin Bacon? It's fun to play. I'm 6 degrees away from Homeless under a bridge. Like every decision I'm worrying about how its going to fail and then how that will lead me to lose my job, my house, and my family will wind up homeless under a bridge.

Regardless of whether you came in here feeling like you have a lot right now, or if you are financially strapped right now, or maybe just hurting emotionally...Paul says he knows the secret to having joy in any circumstance comes from strength he finds in Christ. And while we might say "Oh that sounds nice" the question for me is...how do I get to the place where Christ strengthens me in the face of whatever I'm dealing with? How do I get to the place where I have that peace and joy strong enough to carry me through life? That's where we are going today.