



12.9.2018

ADVENT – Sermon 3 | Philippians 3.1-11 | The Cost of Joy

Good Morning Mercy Church! Merry Christmas! NEXT WEEKEND WE ARE AT PROVIDENCE ROAD! Not here. Providence Rd. Invite some people. 3 Services, all the exact same. 1 Hour. Little shorter than usual. Family Friendly.

We have one logistical challenge with ALL of us going there for the next two weekends: Parking. So here's my ask: Arrive 15 minutes before the service you plan to attend. And park in our Shuttle Lot at the arboretum (SHOW ON MAP). It's a 3 minute shuttle ride to here. Cool People Ride Shuttles. We have all the parking we could need and more over there. I'm asking you to give a close parking space ON SITE for a guest. For the sake of the mission God has called us to.

Pray. We are opening a facility on Christmas. There are only about 300 things that could go wrong. One thing I prayed alot in the college ministry was "God, be gracious in the details." So pray for the details and then pray this would be an eternity changing Christmas. That's what the first Christmas was. WHY NOT THIS ONE!? Somebody you know may have their lives changed forever when they encounter the love of God for them next weekend. Let's pray for that!

During Christmas Season we are looking into a short letter in the bible that the apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian church. A young church planted in a Roman colony. The church believed that Jesus, not Caesar, was the one true God and because of this belief they were, not surprisingly, the outsider in their community. And Paul is trying to show this young church what real Joy looks like and how it can sustain them as Christians living in a plurastic society.

This week, Paul is going to get personal with us. Chapter 2 was about the process of being changed by the joy of Christ. TODAY in chapter 3 Paul is going to get really passionate as he gives you his story about what this change meant for his life. This is Paul's story. He's going to explain what changed in him and was still changing in him as he got to know Christ more and more.

And I will tell you the theme of Paul's story is the title for the sermon today: **The Cost of Joy**. That's what Paul is going to show us. And this is big. It might be the most important sermon in this series. Definitely the most uncomfortable. This is one of those times where it seems like Paul takes following Jesus to a level that most of us don't really want to deal with. And so we'll often call this kind of belief "extreme." And we call it extreme because when we do so, we turn

faith into a spectrum that we can just fall somewhere on. And today Paul is going to bust that whole idea up. **He's going to say there is great Joy in following Jesus. And here is what it cost me to experience that joy.** And its uncomfortable because it's going to cause you and I to say...is the joy that we have the same thing Paul is talking about? So we'll look at what Paul says the cost of Joy is, then we'll evaluate our lives in light of it. Let's go.

In addition, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write to you again about this is no trouble for me and is a safeguard for you.

Here is Paul again saying...hey, rejoice in the Lord! And he says something you gotta take note of. It's subtle but significant. He says its no big deal for him to write about it...and that rejoicing is a safeguard for them. Safeguard is a protective measure. We don't normally think of rejoicing...celebrating...as a protective measure. We think of it as the response to something great happening.

But Paul says their rejoicing will actually work as a safeguard. He is appealing to them to rejoice because regular rejoicing trains the soul. **Rejoicing is celebrating God, the gospel, and the work of God in others.** And rejoicing regularly in Christ & his work in your life trains your soul to respond to life the way it was always meant to respond. That no matter what comes at you, you respond to it in rejoicing in the Lord. Just like consistent bicep curls builds muscle memory, consistent rejoicing builds soul memory.

He said in chapter 2 this is what was carrying him through his life.

17But even if I am poured out as a drink offering on the sacrificial service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18In the same way you should also be glad and rejoice with me. -- Philippians 2:17-18 (CSB)

Rejoicing in Christ is saying I'm going to put my hope in something that will never be destroyed. That can never be consumed. See, how you think of God in the hard times will reveal if you are really getting the gospel. Paul says listen even if I SUFFER AND DIE...if I'm doing that so that your faith can increase...I will do it with joy. Paul didn't just have intellectual assurance that he would be with God one day when he died here on earth. He had soul strengthening JOY. He knew the joy of Nehemiah who looked out on God's people who were weeping at their own sin and weeping at their situation and he said stop weeping...INSTEAD GO EAT RICH FOOD DRINK SWEET WINE AND DO NOT GRIEVE for while the circumstances are bleak, THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH!

And maybe THE running question underneath everything today is Do you have *that* joy? **JOY is spiritual buoyancy that comes from constantly rejoicing in God.** You know what buoyancy means? Its science for when you push it down under the water it pops back up. Like an apple. That's what joy is like in Christians. – we are unsinkable even though we are pushed down. And that buoyancy grows stronger the more we train ourselves to rejoice in the gospel. It's soul memory. Having joy doesn't mean we don't suffer...it just means we won't be destroyed by our suffering. We can't be sunk. Because we KNOW Romans 8 to be true. What can separate me from the Love of God? What can drown my soul? NOTHING! Everything that comes...it will push me down but as long as I am clinging to Christ...BLOOP. Back up to the surface I come. Danger –

BLOOP. Poverty – BLOOP. My Past – BLOOP. Job Loss – BLOOP. Physical Pain – BLOOP. DEATH – BLOOP. SATAN – BLOOP. NOTHING can separate us from the Love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! his love will float you.

Church - We should be experts in joy. But we aren't. Why is this so Hard? Connect it to where people are...

But we've never worked those muscles. So we focus on the blessings instead of the blessers. And when the blessings get removed, when hard times come...we often sink. Know what a scary prayer to pray would be? **God remove any blessings that distract me from rejoicing in you, the gospel, and your work in others.** Are you ready for God to answer that prayer?

The bible talks 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 constantly saying "I have the only thing that really matters." Now that's different than happiness right. Happiness rests in blessings. Joy rests in the blesser.

YOU HAVE THAT JOY? Where are your emotions when the panthers are on a 5 game losing streak?

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. Mine...comes from rejoicing in my God. And he is better than momentary happiness.

Now watch what he does immediately from here...he is going to tell you what the enemy to that joy is.

2 Watch out for the dogs, watch out for the evil workers, watch out for those who mutilate the flesh.

This thing quickly takes a pretty defensive tone. This is Paul again writing to them as a pastor would. He encourages what will sustain and grow their faith, and warns against what will infect it. And the first enemy to the true JOY of Christ he calls "Dogs." He's talking about the sect of Jewish Christians who were putting a plus sign after Christ when talking about salvation.

And Dog is doubly offensive BECAUSE it's the name Jews used to call gentiles. A super offensive name. People didn't have pet dogs. Dogs were the dirty strays running around the streets. And it was also the name Jews used for the gentiles they deemed to be "unclean." So these people from two different backgrounds...Jews & gentiles...who once were a part of two groups that had a great deal of animosity towards each other...were now both in a new group called Christians. And so you had this group who thought they were superior, the Jews, looking down on the gentiles. And so these Jewish Christians are trying to intimidate the gentiles into religious customs that were holdovers from their Jewish days. They were trying to Judaize them. So these folks became known as the Judiazers.

And Paul flips their slur “dog” back at them and says these Judiazers are the dogs. Because they are, see the phrase evil workers...it is better rendered evil advocates of work. They are trying to ADD works to the gospel. And say salvation is Jesus PLUS work. One work in particular: circumcision. These Judiazers are trying to get the uncircumcised gentiles to go get circumcised. And saying “You aren’t a true Christian unless you do THAT.” Not sure how they intended to check you at the door or who got that job, But that’s what they were saying.

And PAUL SAYS WATCH OUT FOR THESE PEOPLE! THESE are the ones who are trying to steal your JOY. Because you will stop rejoicing in God and in Christ and start rejoicing in religious effort. Which is a false gospel. Paul says in fact:

3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and do not put confidence in the flesh —

Paul says Christians are the real “circumcision.” These guys are so insistent on circumcision and yet they’ve misunderstood both the Old Testament and the teachings of Jesus & the early church. And the early church council over in Acts 15 condemned this whole idea saying it was antithetical to the gospel.

28 For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, and true circumcision is not something visible in the flesh. 29 On the contrary, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart — by the Spirit, not the letter. That person’s praise is not from people but from God. -- Romans 2:28-29 (CSB)

True Circumcision is heart change done by the spirit of God! When you add works, in any form, you are making a claim that JESUS didn’t do enough. That his death and resurrection wasn’t enough. That Jesus was insufficient to the task of saving us and somehow our sin-clad works are going to get us the rest of the way there. Listen you need to hear this. This is something we will NOT compromise on here at Mercy Church. We will be as forceful and defensive as Paul is here and I will call out any Judaizers in our day who deny this. Salvation comes by repentance and faith in Christ’s death and resurrection alone.

8 For you are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift — 9 not from works, so that no one can boast -- Ephesians 2:8-9 (CSB)

I told you I wanted to show you the cost of Joy today. Well, there are two sides to it Paul is showing us.. First Paul wants to be very clear that **Joy costs you nothing**. The cost belonged to Jesus. And we are recipients of it, not earners of it.

3 For we are the circumcision, the ones who worship by the Spirit of God, boast in Christ Jesus, and do not put confidence in the flesh —

See what that is? It’s JOY. It’s not confidence in our efforts. The true people of God constantly rejoice in God, his gospel, and his work in others. The longer you are walking with Jesus the

more he is your theme. You experience that buoyancy we talked about a few times and you get more and more confident not in YOU but in him.

A pastor friend my age said that the other day he was talking with an older man in his church who has been walking with Jesus for a long time. And after a little while this pastor just looked at this guy and said sincerely "Man, you have more faith than me." And the man quickly said back "No, I just have more experience with a faithful God than you do."

More commentary here. Good pastoral moment. maturity

That's the mindset of one who knows God. Doesn't boast in his own faith, just in the continued faithfulness of his God.

Paul then says if we COULD make a claim based on works, he'd be the curve breaker. I told you we were gonna get Paul's story. Here it is.

4 although I have reasons for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised the eighth day; of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; regarding the law, a Pharisee; 6 regarding zeal, persecuting the church; regarding the righteousness that is in the law, blameless.

Flesh confidence: Circumcised on the 8th day, nation of Israel, tribe of Benjamin, Hebrew of Hebrews. He's saying man I've got the pedigree. I'm as pure of a Jew as they come. You can't Judaize me anymore than you out-Christmas Buddy the Elf. Can't do it. He knows Santa. Can't out-Jewish Paul, cause he's Super-Jewish.

And he says...OK if works could get you there, particularly Jewish works, nobody can touch me. And then he drops this bomb in verses 7-10 that I want us to rest in for a minute.

7 But everything that was a gain to me, I have considered to be a loss because of Christ.

Listen I think what I want you to hear...is that Paul is speaking from real life experience. He's not speaking hyperbolically. In terms of religious and social equity...Paul was elite of elite. So he tallies everything up and before Christ, these things made him great gains.

BUT...then he meets Christ. On a road to Damascus, on his way to persecute more Christians. And EVERYTHING changes when he meets Jesus. Jesus says I am the one true God, I died for your sins, and you need to follow me & in fact I want you to preach this gospel to others. Paul believes and receives new life in Christ.

And then, It's not that Paul went crazy. It's that he encountered the one true God. And in doing so he instantly realized the things he thought would float him were actually sinking him. So he let go of all of them so he could grab hold of Christ. Now that I know that Christ is what my worth is in, what my hope is in...those things are actually a loss. A burden I readily throw aside.

When I ask you what you are rejoicing in today...What are you celebrating & finding your worth in today? what is your answer? For me, it's professional performance. I know I do this because I sink when things go poorly at church and I float when they go well. Courtney could tell you that

easily. My mood is often dictated by church because I'm rejoicing in my identity as church leader more than I am rejoicing in Christ.

How much am I missing out on what Christ offers me! Do I really need people's approval that badly? That cannot float me ya'll. If I keep trying to find joy there, I'm sinking and I don't even know it. THAT IS A LOSS TO ME BECAUSE IT IS KEEPING ME FROM REJOICING IN CHRIST!!!

What is it for you?

- Blessing of good health? It will fail you –
- Relationship – That dude, that girl...gonna have all kinds of problems
- Personal Success – It can be taken away.

There is a song we sing sometimes here in our worship services called my worth is not in what I own. The chorus says:

"I rejoice in my redeemer, greatest treasure, wellspring of my soul. I will trust in him no other, my soul is satisfied in him alone."

Is your soul satisfied in knowing Christ?

8 More than that, I also consider everything to be a loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.

Now he is expanding beyond his own past to ANYTHING present or future that might compete with his allegiance to Christ. Anything that would try to step into the place of Christ and give him identity, worth, value...it's a loss not a gain. And not only that...I love this...I count that as loss as I look at the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. Listen in this sense Paul is saying **Joy costs you everything.** To which you say...is it nothing or is it everything? Well, both. Because it costs you *your* everything. It costs surrendering it all so that Christ can be your only thing. But when you finally do, you'll know a love so powerful all that *everything* will be as nothing to you.

When one of my children was smaller she lost a quarter and came to me in tears about it. I told her it would be ok and I just kind of went on with my day.

But a few hours later she comes back still so sad about it. WHAT she didn't realize was...I've got **MAKE THE STORY BETTER**

This is often how we relate to God. We lose something in life – money, a relationship, a possession – that seems so important to us, when in light of the reality of knowing God it is like a young child losing a quarter.

This is my prayer today for you. Paul **knew** Jesus. how good and valuable and desirable he is! When you put Jesus on the scale...and everything else on the other side, for Paul everything else just had no weight to it anymore.

In chapter 1 he said he desires that the Philippians will grow in their knowledge and insight of God. This is what he means. To know the person of Jesus. To grow in insight of the implications of what he did for us, will lead to a deepening of your love for Christ. Which leads to sustaining, unparalleled joy.

Right here is the right place to summarize what I believe is an important tone in the Christian life. Sometimes we Christians can get into a mindset where we are simply trying to follow the do's and don'ts as if Jesus is only the RIGHT way and those other things are the WRONG way. Which makes a lot of Christians think of Jesus like they think of Broccoli. Well...these tiny trees are not the most fun thing but I know its good for me. So, I'll eat it. But man I see that Chocolate over there and it looks BETTER. But I'm gonna choose RIGHT over BETTER.

While Paul is acknowledging Jesus is the right way, He's saying when I compare EVERYTHING in this world to Christ...It's not just that Christ is right correct, its that CHRIST IS BETTER! Christ has proven to be better tasting to my soul than anything else could. True joy comes when Christ is not only the right way, but when he's also the better way.

Do you know Christ this way? Not that he's just the right way, but is he genuinely better to you than anything else that is competing for your joy? Then you will be able to say:

Because of him I have suffered the loss of all things and consider them as dung, so that I may gain Christ

Because of Christ....because of changing his allegiances...he did lose everything. He suffered. He went from top of the social circle to being an outsider and an enemy of the state. FAST. What LOSS we would say. Yet Paul says...all of his loss...anything that would seek to keep him from Christ...that was so worthless he considered it DUNG. See his tastes changed.

And this is what happens with Christians who know Jesus. Your taste buds change. What once brought you temporary pleasure...it's just gross now because you've tasted & seen that the Lord is good. That Christ is better. I was reading an article this week about Brian Welch, the former lead guitarist for the band Korn. Huge band in 90s & early 2000s. He reveals in an interview that in all the fame & money, he kept turning to drugs. Hiding drugs anywhere he could so a fix was always nearby. Then in 2005 he became a Christian. And he talks about the change from hardcore metal scene to Christ. And I don't know this guy's faith ok but the interviewer asked what he thought about drugs & even alcohol and he says "I just don't like it. I'd feel horrible hangovers and massive depression. It's not for me, I have a personal relationship with Christ." His tastes changed. The more you walk with Christ, the more he will be better to you.

9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own from the law, but one that is through faith in Christ — the righteousness from God based on faith.

See that phrase "found in him" – that is future language. And the next verse shows us he's talking about the end of time. And he knows the only way to be found righteous before God at the end of days is if you are IN Christ. Paul says in Colossians 3 after all if you are a Christian you have died. Counted all those things as dung. And your new life is hidden with Christ. Christ covers you. If you think of righteousness as being right with God...you can't "be right with God" with your long record of sin. Paul believes that by faith in what Christ has done, that as he

stands before God now...Christ takes his sin record and covers over him. And God says now Paul you are right with me. You are righteous. So from that posture comes Paul's life goals

10 My goal is to know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death, 11 assuming that I will somehow reach the resurrection from among the dead. --

1. Know Him & the power of his resurrection –, For Jesus death came before resurrection. But for us...the power of the resurrection is made available to us before we die! And it's the power of the resurrection that will allow us to do what Christ called his followers to do:

23 Then he said to them all, "If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me. -- Luke 9:23 (CSB)

2. know the fellowship of his sufferings & be conformed to his death – Every believer is going to suffer, to a certain degree, for their allegiance with Christ. Christ said so. The world was, is, and always will be hostile to our allegiance to Christ in some way or another. The more we seek to follow Christ, the more we will face suffering. And Paul says well I want to be conformed to this death. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said When Christ Calls a man he bids him come and die. Are you ready to set aside EVERYTHING...your LIFE...and follow Christ?

****More on what practically it means to fellowship in his sufferings****

Paul says yes this is how he will reach his ultimate goal of reaching the resurrection from among the dead. He's saying this because Paul has experienced what Jesus said in Mathew 10. **Anyone who finds his life will lose it, and anyone who loses his life because of me will find it.** -- Matthew 10:39 (CSB)

TO lose your life is of course not physical death. It is separating yourself from the old way of life completely. So your old decision making grids...they are not your new decision making grids. Your old escapes are not What or WHO you run to anymore. Your desires are replaced with new desires. And so when people who knew you before you found Christ see you now they say things like...she is a different person. I mean it's the same person but they act entirely different. Something big happened. That's what happened to Paul. That's new life.

The PROMISE is that there is power in the resurrection of Christ. That the life you think you live...its end is death. But when you die to that life, you can finally live for the first time.

What do you do with this? I believe some of you have some warning gauges going off right now. Like the check engine light that always goes off in Courtney's van. The gas cap didn't screw on tight but you want to give me a check engine light just to scare me. I open the hood & check the engine. It's there. Check. – REDO

There are some more helpful warning gauges in your life though.

Stress – You are trying to prove your own righteousness

Worry – You are unsure of the future. Unsecure in who you are in Christ

Sensitive to criticism – Deep down you are insecure

Jealousy – Means you have to be superior to others to feel like you are worth something

Christianity feels like a duty, like what's right instead of what's better – It means you don't know the value of Christ yet.

If you have a warning light going off...listen to it. Maybe multiple of them. LISTEN to them. Life without Jesus is a life of seeking and yet not finding. It's a life of unfulfillment and fear and when you die you'll learn why. Because you were made for God but you refused him. And right then, tragically you will find out your goodness was not enough. That you were a sinner whose only way to be accepted by God and to have life eternal was for Christ to save you. To cover you. But its not too late right now.

Come to Christ.

The Bench

- REJOICE!! The theme of this letter. Rejoice, Rejoice!
- It wasn't too much for Paul to write about Rejoicing in the Lord. Because this is the proper response of the heart to everything Paul writes.
- Safeguard – your rejoicing actually becomes your safeguard. Now he asserts that his appeals to rejoice in the Lord are designed to give them stability. When believers *rejoice in the Lord*, they are strengthened to *stand firm* even in the midst of *sacrifice* (2:17–18) and *sorrow* (2:27–29). Paul could easily have demonstrated that building stability on rejoicing in the Lord is a scriptural theme: “The joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh 8:10)¹
- Rejoicing in the Lord is the foundation for a stable life that can handle the changing winds of circumstance

- Dogs: Although Paul puts dog masks on them, the terms clearly point to their Jewish identity. Paul's contrast between mutilation and the true circumcision and his boasting of his own Jewish privileges indicate that these people evidently exalted the importance of circumcision and boasted of their Jewish credentials. Although they were posing as Christian teachers, they placed their emphasis on belonging to the Jewish people. They heaped scorn upon those outside the Jewish family by calling them by traditional Jewish names for outsiders: *dogs* and *evildoers*. Now Paul turns the tables on them and calls them by the same derisive names that they have used for those whom they have excluded. In this satirical twist, Paul gives them a bitter taste of their own poisonous prejudice.²
- In the last term, “mutilators of the flesh” (NIV), literally “the mutilation” (*tēn katatomēn*), Paul deliberately parodies the Judaizers' insistence on circumcision by sarcastically calling it mutilation. (An even bolder term [“emasculate themselves,” NIV] appears in Gal 5:12). For those who had lost the significance of circumcision and insisted on it as a rite for Christians, it was nothing more than a mutilation of the flesh.³

not the Judaizers who insisted on the physical rite. He refers to those who have received the circumcision of the heart, whether they be Jew or Gentile (Rom 2:25–29; Col 2:11). This concept was no innovation, for the OT spoke of it frequently (Lev 26:41; Deut 10:16; 30:6; Jer 4:4; Ezek 44:7). The Judaizers misunderstood OT doctrine as well as Christian teaching. Elsewhere Paul

¹ Hansen, G. W. (2009). [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#) (p. 215). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

² Hansen, G. W. (2009). [*The Letter to the Philippians*](#) (p. 217). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

³ Kent, H. A., Jr. (1981). [*Philippians*](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon* (Vol. 11, p. 138). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

equates this circumcision performed without hands with the believer's removal from spiritual death to spiritual life (Col 2:11, 13). Thus it is virtually synonymous with regeneration.⁴

- Judaizers – Jewish Christians who sought to convince Gentile Christians they had to obey Jewish customs (Gal 2.4). Acts 15 – specifically circumcision. The council of elders had decided NOPE. This is a burden they didn't have to carry.
- INSTEAD – the truly circumcised are the ones circumcised in the heart. And the evidence is:
 - **We worship by the Spirit of God – Gal 5.16-25.** The presence of the Spirit is the distinguishing mark of God's people. The power of the spirit, not the power of the law, is the only adequate guide and power for life and service. MORE ON WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE -
 - **We boast in Christ Jesus** – Christ alone. Nothing in me. No performance that matters.
 - **We put no confidence in the flesh** – who we are apart from Christ.

Listen sometimes in preaching you struggle to contextualize a message because maybe the current culture doesn't have a word or idea that corresponds to the text. Other times though, your current culture provides you a wonderfully clear picture. This is one of those times...

Everything that distracts/keeps/prevents us from rejoicing in Jesus =



Vv 1-4

Can I ask you something? Religious person first. Person who has grown up around church especially. We've got a lot of people just familiar enough with church here in the south who've been vaccinated by the gospel. Vaccine is when you get a tiny dosage that your body learns to tolerate and defeat. So that when a bigger dosage comes, your body can defeat it without it hurting you. Big Science day here at Mercy. See some of you were around Jesus just enough...Christmas & Easter...growing up...whatever it was you got a little bit of Jesus and learned how to keep him tucked away in the spiritual corner. And that's why you, more than anybody else, have the hardest time with Paul's words here. Because to you Jesus isn't the singular source of your joy! He's more like a vaccine to keep you out of hell when you die. And the hardest thing for you is hearing he doesn't work like that.

APOLOGETIC ASIDE

By the way sometimes people think to become a Christian you have to suspend reason, suspend intellect, in order to have faith. That's not true & it's not what Paul is doing. He's actually having the intellectual honesty to say ok what I THOUGHT made me a good person, made me righteous in God's eyes...it didn't. And I am changing everything in light of this truth.

⁴ Kent, H. A., Jr. (1981). [Philippians](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon* (Vol. 11, pp. 138–139). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.

Review of 2 weeks ago:

And a couple weeks ago we said that JOY is found not in your changing circumstances that you can't always control. Joy is found in the unchanging, never ceasing love of Christ. Remember God did not design your spiritual life to be a pond where your circumstances dictate the spiritual water levels. So in good times your spiritual levels are HIGH and when bad times come your spiritual levels are low. Instead, our spiritual lives are to be more like rivers. Where, no matter the circumstances, fresh water is always flowing. The joy of Christ is always available to us like fresh water. So the joyful life comes we said from having our lives poised in two directions at the same time. First its looking to the source of the river...to the source of joy. Receiving Joy. So we said we gotta look deeper into Christmas. Study, meditate on, and consider God's love for you. Then, our response to Christmas will be to give our Christmas to others. In God's design he's created us so that as we give away to others, our joy increases. So your other homework was to figure out...remember this...**Christmas Question: what can I do to serve _____** ? That's the gospel flow. In to us and then out to others.

Listen sometimes in preaching you struggle to contextualize a message because maybe the current culture doesn't have a word or idea that corresponds to the text. Other times though, your current culture provides you a wonderfully clear picture. This is one of those times...

Everything that distracts/keeps/prevents us from rejoicing in Jesus =

