

## God's Christmas Suggestions For Christians.

Text: Phil 4:4-7

Suggested Hymns:

10, 13, 5, 426, 402

1) Rejoice In The Lord

2) Let your gentleness be known

3) Be anxious for nothing

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Philippians 4:4-7, *<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. <sup>6</sup> Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; <sup>7</sup> and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

It is my privilege to help you prepare for a God-pleasing and salutary observance of the Christmas Festival. This privilege involves a responsibility. The proper observance of Christmas is essential to a person's happiness and indispensable for his salvation.

A person who does not celebrate the Christmas which God has prepared for him is without salvation. The importance of observing Christmas in the right manner makes me realise that to me, as your pastor, a precious privilege and a great responsibility have been given, and I pray the Lord to help me in discharging my duty for your spiritual welfare.

It is really the Lord who prepares the hearts for the right observance of Christmas. He provides the message. Everything that a person says of himself about Christmas does not profit man but obscures and denies the Christmas which God has prepared for us.

People speak about the birth of a child at Bethlehem who later spoke words of love and performed deeds of charity, who was persecuted and finally killed by his enemies. They point to Him and extol Him as a wonderful man and exhort that we pattern our life after His. That is their message about Christmas.

But God's Christmas is so different. It speaks of man's damnable sin as the background of what came to pass at Bethlehem. It tells us that God in His unspeakably great love sent His Son into the world for man's redemption and exhorts them to worship the Child in the manger as their Lord and Saviour. That is God's message of Christmas.

That is the Christmas for which we must prepare our hearts. And God provides not only the message but also the power in this message. By His message God moves people to observe Christmas in the right manner. If this were not true, neither you nor I would ever be led to celebrate Christmas properly.

Let us ask God to open our eyes to see and to hallow our will to do what He tells us. May the Lord bless our meditation.

## 1. God's Christmas Suggestions For Christians

### Rejoice In The Lord

**"Rejoice!"** says the Apostle. He is speaking to Christians. In many circles the opinion prevails that the Christian religion is *'one of gloom and devoid of all joy.'* Christians, so many people think, are a joyless people. It is said that he who embraces the Christian religion must bid farewell to all joys and henceforth go through life sighing and sorrowing.

But that is not true. Christians should rejoice. The very message which has made them Christians and which keeps them Christians is one of joy. In our language this message is called the Gospel, which means in the original language *"good news," "joyful tidings."* Good news is preached to Christians every Sunday.

The message of the Christian religion is that of the angel on Bethlehem's fields, ***"Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people."***<sup>1</sup> That is the message of the Christian religion. The very work of the Christian Church consists in comforting the sinners, instilling into their hearts the joy which *surpasses all understanding.*

The person who describes the Christian religion as one of gloom and Christians as a joyless people does not know what he is speaking about. Rejoicing is characteristic of Christians. Of this the Apostle reminds the Christians at Philippi by writing to them, ***Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I***

*will say, rejoice!* These words are addressed also to us and contain a valuable Christmas suggestion. We should celebrate Christmas with rejoicing.

**“Rejoice!”** In what? There are many kinds of rejoicing. Pigs enjoy wallowing in the mud, just as many insects find delight in the manure pile. So do people often rejoice in filth, in the mire of sin and vices. They rejoice in fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.

One person finds joy in sins against the Sixth Commandment. Another rejoices in holding up people and by force, relieving them of their money; he would rather do this than work. Still another rejoices in drunkenness. And yet another rejoices in the possession of filthy earnings. He knows no greater joy than to see his wealth increasing steadily and rapidly. Such rejoicing excludes the kind of which the Apostle speaks. Rejoicing in the filth of sin cannot exist together with the joy of the Christians.

There are joys in this world which are not characteristically Christian but yet permissible. Rejoicing over the fact that one has enough to eat and drink and sufficient clothing, together with a comfortable home, is not sinful in itself. Christians may certainly rejoice in such things. It is furthermore not forbidden to rejoice over sunshine, flowers, growing crops, health, and the like. At Christmas time it is by no means wrong to be happy over the joy of the little ones, or to find pleasure in the tokens of love from loved ones and friends.

But that rejoicing of which the Apostle speaks is greater than all other rejoicing and is of an altogether different nature. He says **“Rejoice in the Lord!”** No Christian will ask: Who is the Lord in whom I should rejoice? Christians know the Lord, Christ, who was born at Bethlehem to save them from sin, from death, and from the power of the devil.

**“Rejoice in the Lord!”** says the Apostle. Rejoice that the Lord was born and has redeemed you; rejoice in the blessings of the Lord. You are sinners — He came to earn forgiveness of sin; you were enemies of God — He came to establish peace, to make you God’s dear children.

Rejoice, for **“when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”<sup>2</sup>** Rejoice, for **“this is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the**

*world to save sinners ....*”<sup>3</sup> That is rejoicing in the Lord, the Son of God, who became a small babe for you and for me. There you have the characteristic joy of Christians.

There are many examples of this joy in the Scriptures, the Psalmist in Psalm 103; Mary’s Magnificat; Zacharias’ Benedictus, and Paul in Romans 8.

And it is a lasting joy. **“Rejoice in the Lord always.”** This joy remains. All other joys vanish. The joy of the slave of wickedness is soon past and the aftermath of a bad conscience remains and causes gloom, and even despair. To rise out of this valley of gloom, he will plunge himself into other sinful joys, only to slide back into the dungeon of remorse.

Even the joy in the earthly gifts of God is of short duration. A person is frequently disturbed in the enjoyment of these things by adversity, which often comes very suddenly.

Or the thought that all these good things may soon be taken from him, or he from these good things, causes him to become the opposite of joyful. He thinks of the future, and the anxious question arises “What will become of me when I reach eternity?” That thought of the future robs his heart of joy and leaves it gloomy.

But the joy in the Lord, in the Saviour, remains. It is not affected or terminated by the changes in life. It is not affected by the thought of death and eternity. In fact, just when the Christian thinks of death and eternity this joy manifests itself and makes him happy.

It is then that he rejoices most in the Lord, who saved him from everlasting death, from the torments of hell. This joy of the Christians outlasts this life. Its fullness begins when this life ends. Forevermore in heaven he will rejoice over Jesus who died for him on Calvary. Thus the rejoicing of the Christian is not of short duration, like all other joys, but is lasting, and eternal.

This joy should be yours, also and especially at Christmas when we celebrate the birth of the Lord. Think about the Saviour’s birth, and not only about other things connected with the outward celebration of Christmas. Go to Bethlehem and take your children with you. Enter into the stable in which the Saviour lies bedded on hay and realise that without this Child you would be lost eternally, but

that through faith in this Child you are saved, for He came to save and did save you.

**“Rejoice in the Lord!”** — Or do you say, “I cannot rejoice; I have little money,” or, “I am sick, with little prospect of regaining my health,” or, “There has been trouble in my family”? Listen. How about the Lord, the Saviour? Is He gone, too? If not, why, then, should your Christmas be spoiled?

The Lord is born for you; He is your Saviour. Rejoice in Him, and your Christmas will be bright and joyful in spite of any tribulations. **“Rejoice in the Lord!”** That is the first Christmas suggestion of our text. Equally important is the second.

## **2. God’s Christmas Suggestions For Christians**

### **Let Your Gentleness Be Known**

It reads: ***Let your gentleness be known to all men.*** The joy in the Lord should manifest itself by our whole conduct among our fellow men, especially also by gentleness. The meaning of the word ‘gentleness’ is forbearance, patient endurance of offences. In other words, be of a gentle mind, yielding; do not insist boisterously on your rights if nothing essential is at stake, but have a temperament which has been made mild by the joy in the Lord found in your hearts.

Although you must be stern and firm against all false doctrine and against all wickedness, be gentle in personal matters. Be meek and not haughty, kind and not gruff. This is indeed a Christmas suggestion.

The Christmas message should permeate our every action. It should have this effect on us that we want to serve Jesus who came into the world to save us. And Jesus tells us to pattern our life after His holy life, which was characterised by love, meekness and patience. If we do not heed this suggestion, we shall spoil our Christmas and that of our friends. Let us, therefore, make known our gentleness and our forbearance to all people.

This is a necessary admonition. We Christians experience so much hatred and opposition which is often of a personal nature. Even by our own brethren we are sometimes misjudged. Our flesh says, ***“Get revenge; get even; do not take anything; you were in the right; insist on your rights.”*** If we heed this mandate of our flesh, the consequence will be the opposite of gentleness, which is

heartache, wrangling, strife, things which must cast a gloom on even the joyous festival of Christmas.

Therefore, says the Apostle, overcome these feelings in your hearts and be gentle, mild, patient, and kind, in your conversation with your fellow men. Be forgiving in your hearts, just as God forgives you for the sake of Him who was born at Bethlehem. Be conciliatory in words and deeds.

Be gentle in your home, among your brothers and sisters, and also among the children of the world with whom you come in contact. What of it, even if you suffer wrong?

*“The Lord is at hand.”* Soon the Lord will come to take you out of this world of strife and envy and opposition into the mansions above, where everlasting, undisturbed peace reigns.

That is the second Christmas suggestion: Let your gentleness be known to all people, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. By making your gentleness known to your fellow men avoid strife and trouble. The Psalmist says in Psalm 133:1, *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is For brethren to dwell together in unity! May it always be thus pleasant among us.*

Can we heed the first Christmas suggestion of God and not the second? “Faith works by love.” If we stand before the manger at Bethlehem and rejoice over the birth of the Saviour, our faith will show itself by an attitude of love toward our fellow men, even toward those who irritate us by their loveless words and deeds. The Lord wants us to have that attitude.

How can we refuse God the Father who so loved us that He gave His only-begotten Son for our salvation? How can we refuse Jesus who became poor for our sakes? The love of Christ will constrain us to let our gentleness be known to all people.

And finally we read of this third Christmas suggestion in our Epistle: *Be anxious for nothing.*

### **3. God’s Christmas Suggestions For Christians Be Anxious For Nothing**

Anxious thoughts or cares will rise even in the heart of Christians. Is there anyone here who is never bothered and troubled by cares? We all know what cares are. You may have come into the house of worship with a load of cares. Your loved ones may not be in good health, or your own health may be affected.

Your finances may be low, and you may be worrying, "*How shall I make ends meet?*" How many people are spoiling their Christmas by harbouring such anxious cares! Will you? The Apostle suggests, ***Be anxious for nothing.*** Do not worry about anything. Do your duty and, yes, and what? Scripture says in 1 Peter 5:7, ***Cast all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.***

And our text says, ***Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.*** Why be weighted down with cares? Unload all of them on the Lord. He wants you to do this. He loves you more than a mother can love, and tells you to take everything to Him in prayer.

Do you lack anything? Ask Him for it. Have you something that you would like to get rid of? Ask Him to take it from you.

***Let your requests be made known to God.*** How often have we not sung the words,<sup>4</sup>

Have we trials and temptations?  
Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged;  
Take it to the Lord in prayer.

O what peace we often forfeit,  
O what needless pain we bear,  
All because we do not carry  
Everything to God in prayer.

Let us do what the Apostle urges us to do: cast our sorrows and cares on the Lord. Let us do so now and always. Do not permit the cares to rob you of the Christmas blessings which the Lord wants to shower on you. By prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God. And trust that He will lead you aright.

And while you pray, thank God. ***“With thanksgiving.”*** Thank God for the many blessings which He bestowed on you in times past and which He promises for the future.

Why always dwell upon those things which you call evil, instead of meditating on the goodness of the Lord? Pray and give thanks, and all cares will vanish. If they arise again, pray and give thanks again.

Such a childlike attitude of dependence on God will be found in us if we really heed the first Christmas suggestion of God, ***Rejoice in the Lord.*** If we recognise God’s love in sending His Son for our salvation, we can implicitly trust Him to lead us aright, to hear our prayer, and to receive our humble thanks.

Many will wish us a ***“Merry Christmas.”*** God does more. He tells us have a joyful, blessed Christmas. May He move us to rejoice in our salvation, to serve Him by an attitude of gentleness and love toward our fellow men, and to cast all our cares upon Him. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Luke 2:10

<sup>2</sup> Galatians 4:4

<sup>3</sup> 1 Timothy 1:15

<sup>4</sup> Hymn 426