

Philippians 1:3-11
December 9, 2018 – SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Recipe for Advent Joy

☆ remembrance (vv.3-6)

☆ affection (vv.7-8)

☆ love (vv.9-11)

In the name of Christ our Advent King, dear preparing Christians:

How skeptical are you? Seeing a certain someone in an apron could raise an eyebrow. First year of marriage, birthday cake for the bride. No problem. One Jiffy box mix, 8” pan...½” rise? Solution: crosscut, stack the layers, turn the flat side to the wall. Icing? Follow the directions....Why so thick? It’s hard to spread goeey sugar on a dry white cake. Is it always true, “It’s the thought that counts”?

When it comes to feeding souls, huge advantage. God creates, God redeems, God sanctifies with the finest ingredients. Today we receive His **Recipe for Advent Joy**. Preparation’s first ingredient...

☆ remembrance (vv.3-6)

How could a man like Paul have memories like this and think this way? *“I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴Every time I pray for all of you, I always pray with joy, ⁵because of your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶I am convinced of this very thing: that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”*¹

In his former life as Saul of Tarsus, Paul wasn’t just skeptical, he was a highly trained Jewish rabbi rabid to destroy what he considered a sect of the Nazarene. But the risen Lord Jesus converted Saul and sent him on missionary journeys where violence always awaited, to places like Philippi, Macedonia.

Philippi was a legionnaires’ retirement city. From all over the known world legionnaires were the fighting force of the Roman Empire that lasted 1,000 years. Highly trained in combat, and building roads everywhere, they signed up for 25 years from age 17 on. Ability to swim – mandatory, with full gear, armor, supplies (66-100 pounds) Daily march 20 miles, build fortified camp, cook your own food, survival rate – maybe a third. But a free farm awaits those who can live that long. Military was big in Philippi.

Not all memories can be happy. A few decades earlier three Roman legions were ambushed in the Teutoburg Forest by a former Roman soldier. Arminius knew Roman tactics and their inability to fight in forests. His statue stands only a few miles from here, Hermann the German atop the hill next to our WELS College of Ministry in New Ulm. Arminius was prepared for that battle; Roman legionnaires were caught by surprise. How many proud souls will fall on the Last Day when Christ returns in triumph?

Paul constantly remembered in thankful prayer all his friends at Philippi. They believed the Good News: God sent His own Son to pay our guilt on the cross in the ultimate sacrifice, not for land, but to defeat death itself and all the forces of hell raising rebellion against God. Paul trusted not in them, but in God who began their faith and would bring it to its goal on the Last Day. To **remembrance** add...

☆ affection (vv.7-8)

“I am equally convinced that it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, for both in my chains and in my defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all share

¹ Evangelical Heritage Version (EHV) © 2017 The Wartburg Project. www.wartburgproject.org. NPH (800-662-6022).

in this grace with me. ⁸*Yes, God is my witness of how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*” Maybe **affection** for Lydia, but for the jailer at Philippi? **Affection** for him too?

Paul and Silas met Lydia and other Jews worshipping down by the river (Acts 16) because apparently there were not enough Jewish men in that Roman colony for a synagogue. Paul preached that Jesus fulfilled all the Old Testament prophecies, proving He is the promised Messiah, the Son of God. Lydia believed and showed her faith by determined hospitality Paul could not refuse. But his kindness got him in trouble. On the way to prayer one day, Paul healed a demon possessed slave girl, depriving her masters of big money. Riots for Romans were the worst. Penalty for cause? Severe flogging and prison. Romans had no limits like the Jews’ “40 lashes -1.” Sharp bone and stone on leather strips to a handle could shred skin and flesh off the back of victims. Some died. Paul and Silas in jail? Singing hymns of praise deep in the night. How strange those Jews must have seemed to the hardened Roman jailer.

He had better things to do than listen. But the Roman penalty for losing a prisoner was death. Fall asleep, wake up in an earthquake, see all the prison doors open? The jailer drew his sword to finish off his own terror. *“Don’t harm yourself! We are all here!”* He calls for lights, trembling falls on the floor of Paul’s cell: *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* Not a word of doing; just trust what God’s grace has done for you: *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your household.”* Baptized one and all, the whole family of all ages *“was filled with joy”* believing in God. After that when Paul left Philippi, the jailer and Lydia and their fellow believers had nothing better to do than to follow Paul all along his mission journeys with their love gifts to support him. **Affection** – both ways. Just add...

☆ love (vv.9-11)

Recipe for Advent Joy – could you find a better prayer for loved ones? *“And I pray that your love may still increase more and more in knowledge and every insight. ¹⁰This will result in your approval of the things that really matter, so that you will be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”*

Do you have Bible **knowledge**? So does the world that crucifies everything of Christ. Accept the Bible as true? Satan does, as he wars against everything godly. We need tactical training in **love** to trust in Jesus. Then you can prioritize as Jesus says, *“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”* (Matthew 6:33 NIV84) Everyone wants to be happy. In life’s forest Satan wants to ambush you. The Lord warns: *“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.”* (1 Peter 5:8–11 NIV84) As long as there’s life, there’s hope in God’s **love**.

Our risen Savior always lives, so we join determined souls from Philippi testing and approving *“things that really matter.”* Wouldn’t that take a ton of pressure off your holy-day festivities if you remembered that Jesus really is the reason for the season? Why get all wrapped up in tinsel and lights if it short circuits your worship of your Savior in the manger? What really matters more than God’s **love** as you keep growing in your faith? Then *“you will be pure and blameless”* on the only day that counts in the end. For all eternity *“the day of Christ”* will end life on earth as we know it. Then begins unending terror for all who rejected Jesus in unbelief and eternal bliss for all who listened. God keeps calling today for all to trust God’s righteous verdict of “Not guilty!” His road crews remove every obstacle that could trip you up, pressing on to victory in Christ, the ultimate Commander. He’s been there and back from grace to glory. Think of it, fellow soldiers of the cross: retirement villa, mansion above – no mortgage, no death or mourning or crying or pain – all passed away in that land where **love** rules. **Recipe for Advent Joy! – remembrance, affection, love.** As Pastor Gawrisch put it, *“Nice to know that you don’t have to be exact with those ingredients. Just dump in as much as you can mix.”* Let’s get cooking. Amen.

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