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Scripture: Phillipians 4:4-7.

Theme: Rejoice in the Lord.

Text: Phillipians 4:4-5.... "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand."

Proposition: To "rejoice in the Lord" produces an example of forbearance in daily life.

Date written: Dec. 19, 1956.

Dates and places preached:

Dec 23, 1956 - Grace Ch.,

Cheyenne, Wyo - - 8:15 & 11 a.m.

Dec. 8, 1963, Battery "C", 4th How Bn,
157th artillery, Montrose, Colo.

Dec. 6, 1964 - Montrose, Colo, 8:00 & 11:00

Dec. 18, 1966 Blanca & Alamosa, Colo -

Dec 18, '66

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Introduction:

1. The sky lightened gradually, turned pink, then the light became more intense, and the sun burst over the horizon. The avocados, oranges and grapefruit hanging on the limbs of the trees in the surrounding groves looked like so many ornaments on a lot of Christmas trees. The fresh damp smell of dirt and dew held a promise of something new for the early riser whose shoes were soaked as he trudged through the wet grass, looking at this early-morning tropical show so unfamiliar to him. Gradually the sun rose higher, the dew dried from the grass and weeds, and the sun's rays piercing the glass panes of the radiant heaters on the house tops began to replenish the hot water supply so diminished by the previous nights baths. But long before the dew dried, and even as the sun was fast forcing its way above the horizon and the early-rising visitor was returning from his foot-soaking tramp, squeals and shouts, laughter and loud "Thank you" sounds could be heard through the open screen doors and windows of the new housing development in southern Florida near Miami. Soon children began bursting through the doors playing cowboy and Indians with their new "guns" and bows and arrows, showing

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their new dolls, riding their new bikes and ~~other~~ making use of other new toys in the warm early-morning sunshine. It was a day of rejoicing. It was a day of gifts. It was Christmas.

2. Christmas is a day of rejoicing, to our American way of thinking. ~~The~~ ^{Recognition} of Christ's birth and mission is to recognize and rejoice over the greatest gift man ever received -- Jesus Christ. All over our land and in many other countries of the world Christmas morning will see joyful scenes similar to the Florida one we described, though in our part of the country there may not be open doors and windows at this time of year, the visitor may tramp in snow and ice if he dares go out into the cold, and the smaller children for the most part will play with their new toys inside the house. But wherever you are, Christmas means happiness and rejoicing.

3. Many years ago one of history's greatest men had Christmas every day, in a way, and rejoiced in it, even though Dec. 25 wasn't then observed as Christ's birth date, nor was there any formal birthday celebration over Christ's birth. Paul, the influential early-day apostle of Jesus who wrote thirteen of our New Testament books, most of which are letters that he wrote to various churches or people, wrote to the Christians at

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Phillipi, the first town on the continent of Europe to have a Christian Church. The New Testament Book of Phillipians is a letter that he wrote to the Phillipian christians. The keynote of Phillipians is one of joy in the faith of Christ, which is well summarized in our text, Phillipians 4: 4-5, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand."

4. Rejoicing is the spirit and keynote of Christmas, and Christmas marks the beginning of Christianity. The cause of rejoicing, that "the Lord is at hand," must be remembered. We want here to think of the long-term, everyday effects of rejoicing in the Lord, as they are suggested in our Scripture and text. We want to begin now, this Sunday before Christmas, to prepare for making the Christmas spirit of good and lasting effect throughout the year.

I. Christmas is the most natural time to rejoice in the Lord.

1. A recent publication showed a picture of an outside wall plaque in German which marked the place where "Silent Night, Holy Night," the world's most-loved Christmas hymn, was written. There are two seasons in the year when a minister seldom hears the criticism "we never

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sing familiar hymns at church." The great hymns of Christmas and Easter are well-known by those with even the slightest acquaintance with the two chief observances of Christendom.

a. Probably the great Christmas hymns are shared by all branches of Christianity more than any other hymns or any other aspect of Christianity. At a community Christmas tree sing and program, a nightly thing for a week, in a Wyoming Community I can remember hearing the same songs sung from night to night by a group representing respectively the Roman Catholic Church the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (the Mormans), the Methodists, Episcopalians and Presbyterians -- all the larger Christian groups of the community. Besides "Silent Night," other great Christmas hymns used by almost all divisions of Christianity are "O Little Town of Bethelhem," "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing," "While Angels Watch Their Flock by Night," "The First Noel," "There's a Song in the Air," and others.

b. ^{One} ~~Last~~ ^{radio} Sunday (Dec. 16, 1956) I heard via a community chorus from Denver sing the more famous portions of Handel's great Christmas oratorio, "The Messiah." This great and traditional Christian work is appreciated

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by people of all branches of Christian faith, as well as by many music lovers of other faiths. People of the various churches composed the community chorus of Denver, as happens in many other communities.

c. To many of us one reason for Christmas being the most natural time to rejoice in our faith is because we do have such beautiful music, which just seems to make us joyous and happy. We hear the beautiful and familiar strains, and we want to join in with them, and they make us feel happier and ~~more~~ kindlier.

2. But the beautiful and great hymns of the season grew out of peoples' feeling of wanting to rejoice over the central theme of the Christian faith. The hymns are the result of, not the cause of, the joy in men's hearts over the Christmas message.

a. We rejoice because we see in the tiny Christ child God Himself telling that the only, the great, the infinite, the all-powerful, the all-intelligent, Creator and guide of the universe and world is interested in you, ~~whom~~ who is one small and obscure individual! This almost unimaginable Being is interested in not just one individual but in every individual, you and me.

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What's more, the God-in-the-Christ-Child way of the incarnation says that God is interested in you and me not just as a stern judge whose accounts of right and wrong must be balanced eventually. He is interested, instead, as one who forgives you because He loves you and wants you to have the very best life possible. As a father, as a friend and companion, as a teacher and guide, as a beloved and older brother. We rejoice because Jesus demonstrated for us the Godly approach to life, and we see in that approach the very best that is possible for us.

b. This, we rejoice, really, at recognition of the biggest thing that can happen to us, the recognition of our Savior, the Christ Child. His birthday, like the birthdays of ones we love, is the natural time to celebrate and rejoice. But always remembering whom we are feting.

II. A Christian Christmas brings out in us forbearance toward others.

1. I like the stories that have come out of both World Wars of fighting that stopped on Christmas Day. They sometimes tell of the firing stopping between opposing troops facing each other in parallel trenches, and the singing, each

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group in its own language but to the same tune, of the familiar and beautiful Christmas carols. In talking recently with a man who in World War II had this type of experience, he said that after that Christmas day there was no hate in his heart, or among the rest of his buddies, toward the enemy, and he didn't believe there was hate toward them on the part of the individual enemy soldiers. To the question of "why did you continue after that to shoot at them?" he replied that it was because he was ordered to, and he supposed that's why the enemy soldiers fired at them. We might wish to comment by saying that even in the hell of war, Christmas can cause, has caused at times, at the very least a brief revival of humanity, and created some respect for those we consider our enemies. This is a type of forbearance which comes from Christmas.

2. We take this idea of forbearance from our text's words "Let all men know your forbearance." Forbearance means readiness to be reasoned with. It implies gentleness, the opposite of a spirit of contention and self-seeking. Forbearance produces an undisturbed heart, the true atmosphere in which one can rejoice.

3. A season of celebration in which

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we give expensive gifts, at least for our individual budgets, to those we love and in which we remember with greetings our friends of past and present, is one to which we can react in a couple of ways.

a. We can grouch about the expense, while overdoing the spending and going in debt to keep up with the Jones on the gifts our kids get. "Christmas Comes But Once a Year" is apt to get the response "Thank Goodness." Or

b. We can find real pleasure in the sharing of the season, through keeping its expense down to reasonable proportions. We try to make sure that we do some sharing, also, with the really unfortunate, like the tubercular, unfortunate children and families, refugees like the ^{substan} Hungarians from the recent strife in their home country, etc.

4. In Christian forbearance arising in the Christmas season one doesn't react critically, ~~in a way~~ to blame the unfortunate, but tries to understand the reasons for his faults and misfortune and to attack the causes of the bad ~~thing~~ things. He doesn't attack colleagues and associates whom he doesn't like, speaking in a criticising manner, but tries in the spirit of Jesus to under-

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stand the causes for that which he does not like and tries to forgive. If there just isn't a chance of reconciliation or correction of the unliked person one can still act cordially in his presence but keep away from the individually as much as possible and so not strain the relationship!

Conclusion:

1. Christmas is a time of rejoicing. As Paul said in his letter to the Phillipians, "Rejoice in the Lord always again I will say, Rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand."

3. We can say that Christmas is a time to "rejoice in the Lord," and that if we make Christ central in Christmas then our Christian reaction will produce forbearance towards others.

4. Our forbearance, brought about by a Christian Christmas, will produce forgiveness, understanding, and appreciation of others. It will make new friends and wonderful memories. It will help prepare us for companionship always with the one born at Christmas.

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