

# Rejoice Always

by Anton Bosch

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*This sermon focuses on the practical instructions given by Paul in 1 Thessalonians, emphasizing the importance of obeying these commands as they are equally authoritative as the Old Testament commands. The speaker highlights the numerous reasons believers have to rejoice, ranging from God's character, the atonement, the Holy Spirit's presence, answered prayers, to the promise of future glory. The message encourages a constant attitude of rejoicing in all circumstances, grounded in the unchanging nature of God and His faithfulness.*

**Scripture:** 1 Thessalonians 5:12, Hebrews 13:5, Romans 8:28, Revelation 21:4, Philippians 4:4

**Topics:** "Rejoicing in All Circumstances", "Authority of Scripture"

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## Description

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## Transcript

1 Thessalonians chapter 5, 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, and I'm going to just deal with one verse consisting of two words this morning, so it's a little bit different to our usual where we deal with longer sections. And we're going to, in the next few weeks as we deal with the end of this book, be spending a little bit more time on each of these verses because there are these very short sentences that Paul is just, it's just really a bullet list of important statements that he makes. And obviously he doesn't provide any reasoning or theology or background to them because they are so basic and elementary, and yet at the same time we forget them, and they are supported by many, many scriptures right through the Old and the New Testament.

And so let's read from verse 12 through 23, sorry, through 28, 12 through 28, and I'm going to deal with verse 16. And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly. Comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for

yourselves and for all.

Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Do not quench the spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things.

Hold fast to what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now, may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it. Brethren, pray for us. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the Brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

And so, as you know, and as we've said in the last week or two, that Paul is now dealing with a practical application. He has dealt with the theology, and he's now dealing with practical things, and just a whole list, as I've said, a bullet list, really, of statements and instructions that the Christians in Thessalonica need to obey, and obviously these are instructions to us also. And remember that also, and just by way of background, and for those who may be new with us this morning, that we don't believe that the New Testament is, that the Old Testament is really about commands, and that the New Testament is not about commands, but in fact that there are 613 commands in the Old Testament, according to the count of the rabbis, of which we know the ten as the ten commandments, and then the 603 other commands, but that the New Testament contains over 2,000 commands.

So there are three times as many commands in the New Testament as there are in the Old Testament, and they are equally authoritative. They are not just suggestions. That's the problem.

We look at the Old Testament, and it says you shall not kill, and we say, well, that's a command. And then here we see it, rejoice always, and we say, well, that's a suggestion. There's no difference between them.

They come from the same God, they have the same authority, and they have the same jurisdiction. They are applied to God's people. The ten commandments in the Old Testament apply to Israel.

These commands apply to the church, to us as Christians, and obviously to unbelievers, they can't apply most of these things, because they are not spiritually regenerate, they don't have the spiritual wherewithal to do these things. But these are commands, and they are things that we must do. And we say, well, you know, not murdering is something that's not too hard to obey.

Some find that hard to obey, but that's not so hard. Rejoicing always, well, you know, that's a little bit more difficult. How do you define whether I'm rejoicing or not rejoicing? Well, you know deep down in your own heart whether you are rejoicing or not.

And of course, the problem is that when we talk about these kinds of things that have to do with emotions, we say, well, you know, I just don't feel like it. I don't feel like rejoicing. And you know, we take our ideas from the world who rejoice when things are good, and who don't rejoice when things are hard.

But in fact, the basis of our rejoicing, and I'm going to give you a whole list this morning, and I'm not going to tell you how many there are, otherwise you're going to figure out how many hours we're going to be

here, but a whole list of reasons why we ought to rejoice. And you'll see that none of them have to do with our material or our physical situation. The scripture gives us very little reason to say, well, rejoice because you're rich, or because you're healthy.

And of course, we are grateful for those things. We are grateful for everything that God has given to us, and all of His blessings and His provision in our lives. But that is not really the basis of our rejoicing.

Because if that is the basis of our rejoicing, then there would be many Christians who really cannot rejoice because they live in very dire circumstances. Many of them are in prison for their faith. Many Christians are being persecuted.

Many Christians are homeless and find themselves in all sorts of difficulties and trials, and they say, well, I don't have reason to rejoice. Now, the reason for our rejoicing is not in our material situation, or even our physical or our emotional situation, but is in the reality of what God is and what God has done. And so we rejoice.

And the first one I'm going to give you is that we rejoice because of God's character. We rejoice because of God's character. Now what do we mean by that? Well, we would need to do a whole year's Bible studies on the character of God.

But God is faithful. God is gracious. God is loving.

God is patient or long-suffering. God is righteous. God is holy.

And so we can go on and on and on. This is who God is, and we rejoice in who God is. We don't often find much rejoicing in who man is.

We find every reason to be discouraged and disheartened and disgruntled in what man is. Man is unreliable. Man is unfaithful.

Man is dishonest. And the list goes on and on and on. So our rejoicing cannot be in man, but our rejoicing is in God and in his character, and in the fact that his character does not change.

He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And that's a wonderful thing. So the long-suffering that God exhibited towards Israel in the Old Testament is the same towards us today.

God hasn't suddenly run out of patience, and I'm so grateful for that for myself. And so God's character is the first reason for our rejoicing. And I don't know that I've given you the list in a very good order.

It's difficult to put these things in any particular order of priorities. We rejoice in the Father's love and care for us. We have a gracious and a loving Heavenly Father.

And again, it doesn't matter what goes on in our own lives. It doesn't matter what's going on in your emotions or in your relationships or in your finances or in your health. But we have a loving and a gracious Heavenly Father who cares for us.

And that's reason enough to rejoice. And you say, well, he doesn't fix my problem. Well, we'll get to that in a few moments.

Our rejoicing is simply in who he is, that he is our Father. The world does not have a father. In fact, Jesus said, the devil is your father.

Now, there's not a lot of rejoicing in that. And that's why they have to use alcohol and drugs and all sorts of other things to get some kind of joy, because they don't have a basis for joy. But we have God as our Father.

And that should be a great reason for rejoicing. Of course, we rejoice in the atonement, in the work that Jesus did for us as he died upon that cross of Calvary and paid the price for our sins. That's probably one of the greatest reasons for rejoicing.

And again, we can't really elevate any of these reasons above the others. We rejoice because our sins have been forgiven, that our names have been written in the Lamb's Book of Life. Remember, the disciples went out preaching, and they came back and they were rejoicing.

They said, oh, Lord, this is great. The demons are obedient to us. We cast them out in your name.

And Jesus says, that's no reason for rejoicing. Now, that is a message for some Christians who seem to think that that really is what it's all about. In fact, I heard a preacher preach once.

If you really want joy, you need to go and cast out a few demons. But in fact, what Jesus said is, don't rejoice that the demons are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. And so, if your name is written there today, if you've received Jesus as your Lord and as your Master and as your Savior, and you are born again, that is all we need to rejoice.

We don't need any of these other reasons. That's sufficient reason to rejoice, because we are saved and our names are written in the Book of Life. And He is the one who said, I will keep you.

And so, the Father's love and care, Jesus' work of atonement, deliverance from the power of sin. And while this is part of the atonement, it's really something that I want to highlight separately. Remember that as we come to Christmas, we remember that the angel said, you will call His name Jesus.

And He will be Jesus because He will save His people from or out of their sins. Out of their sins. He has come not just to save us from hell, but He has come to save us from sin and to save us out of the bondage and the slavery of sin and to set us free that we might be able to serve and to worship Him.

And so, one of the things that as Americans we rejoice in is our civil liberty, that we are free men. But as Christians, one of the greatest things that we can rejoice in is our spiritual liberty, that we have been set free from the enslavement and the bondage of sin and that we have been delivered from the power of sin and of the power of death. And so, that's one of the great reasons to rejoice, is that we have been set free.

We rejoice in Jesus' continued intercession. He ever lives to make intercession for us. And I'm not giving you scriptures for each of these because it's going to slow us down and instead of two hours, it's going to become three hours.

So, you can look these up and maybe it'll be good homework for you. If Henry can give you homework, I can give you homework also. So, maybe your homework is to take each one of these and to find the appropriate scriptures for them.

And so, Jesus is our intercessor. He is praying for us. He's praying for us even right now.

And you know, some of us get together before the service and we pray for the service and other Christians that we're in fellowship with in other churches are praying for us. Their services are over maybe already and yet they're still praying for us and we pray for one another. But you know, the most wonderful thing is that the Lord Jesus is praying for us.

And he's praying for us as a congregation and he's praying for us individually. And he's praying as he said to Peter, I prayed for you that your faith will not fail. And so, he is praying for us.

He's interceding for us. He's praying that we will get this message this morning, that we will understand what it is that his heart is trying to convey to us on this particular subject. And so, we praise God that he's interceding for us, that we have an advocate with the Father, that we're not on our own, but that we have a great and a wonderful intercessor.

Not just an intercessor who is untouched by our needs, like an earthly lawyer. Earthly lawyers, it's just a job. They don't care anything about your situation, whether you win or lose the case, or you know, how much it's going to cost you or whatever.

They have no concern about that. It's just a job. But our intercessor, our advocate is standing before the Father, and he feels with us.

He is touched by the weaknesses, and our infirmities, and our sicknesses, and our temptations, because he was in every point tested, just as we are. And so, he stands before the Father, and he pleads our cause, not on the basis of just God be merciful to them, but on the basis of his shed blood, that the Father would receive us on the basis of what Jesus has done. And so, we have a continued intercessor, and we're able to rejoice over that.

The sixth one is that we rejoice because we have the Holy Spirit. We have the Holy Spirit, as Henry prayed earlier this morning, who is our counselor, who guides us, who teaches us, who leads us into all truth, and who gives gifts to the church in various shapes and forms, and who empowers his church, and who reveals the Lord Jesus to us. And again, we would have to spend a year's worth of Bible studies on the work of the Holy Spirit.

And all of those things are reasons for us to rejoice, that he has not left us comfortless, that he has not gone away and said, well, you're on your own now, and when I'm done, I'll come back after 2,000 years. And I'll see what's left. No, he said, I'm going to leave you, send you the comforter, the Holy Spirit, and he will be with you even to the end.

He will be with you always. And so, we praise God that we have the Holy Spirit, who the book of Ephesians says is the down payment, or the earnest of our inheritance. And so, because according to Romans, we buy one spirit, cry, Abba, Father, because we have the spirit which confirms that we are born again.

We also have the confirmation that he will complete the work that he has begun, and that he will come again for us. We rejoice in all kinds of spiritual blessings. And I've just, I just had to put this hold all in there because I know you're going to say, well, you know, you missed out this area or that area.

But God has poured upon us all manner of spiritual blessings. And we're going to look at, we've looked, I'm looking at some of them this morning, but there are many others that we just can't list because they're just too many of them. And so, we rejoice in those blessings, God's blessings that he pours upon us in so

many ways, and so often, and so faithfully.

We forget those things, we take them for granted until we go through a difficult patch and we say, well, now I, I think that when the rain eventually comes, I think we'll all be happy for the rain. We'll complain after the first day of rain, but we'll be happy for the rain. This morning as I woke up and I looked out the window, I just said, Lord, we need the rain.

We need the rain to wash away the soot, and the ash, and the dust. We haven't had rain for 10 months almost now, and the plants are crying out, the whole earth is crying out. The fires are because we haven't had the rain before the winds, and so the winds came before the rains, as you know.

We need the rain. But when the rain comes, we just, you know, we just say, oh, it's, yeah, it's fine, it's just the rain. Instead of saying, well, God has been good, God has been faithful, he has given us the rain again.

And the same is true spiritually. It's only when we go through spiritual times of drought and of famine that we appreciate the spiritual blessings that God gives to us. Just ordinary things like the preaching of his word, the fellowship of his saints, and we're going to speak about those things in a moment.

So we rejoice in all kinds of spiritual blessings. Number eight, we rejoice in unlimited access to the throne of grace. Unlimited access to the throne of grace.

Come boldly to the throne of grace, Hebrew says. And so we don't need an appointment. If I want to see my doctor, I have to make an appointment.

I can't just go there and say, well, you know, here I am, you know, see me. But God, the master of the universe, does not have an appointment book. You don't have to call him up and say, can I come to you tomorrow at such and such a time.

But we are able to come boldly, unrestricted. Unrestricted. There's no limit to how many times we can go back, how many times a day we can go to the throne of grace and say, Lord, I need to find grace and I need mercy to help in a time of need.

And so there is an open door, and that's one of the most wonderful things. You can't even get an appointment. Some of the people in our community, because of the issues that we've been dealing with, have been trying for over a year to get an appointment with a mayor.

And we're not talking about one or two people, we're talking about a whole community saying to the mayor, we want to speak to you. We can't get you to speak to the mayor. Well, we can speak to the almighty God, and that's a wonderful privilege.

And again, we just assume that's fine. I can just pray any time I want. Yeah, I can pray, but what a privilege that we're able to come to the Lord of lords and the King of kings, to the God of the universe at any time, for any length of time, with any size problem, whether it's the smallest little thing or whether it's the biggest thing, that we're able to come to Him and we're able to pray and we're able to rejoice in that.

We're able to rejoice in answered prayers. And so you say, well, that's the same thing. No, it's not the same thing.

Obviously, He doesn't answer all our prayers because we don't need everything that we pray for. But when He does answer prayer, and when there are really big things in our lives, and I think that we all have experienced praying and asking God to help us in really big issues that we struggle with or that we're dealing with in our lives, and how that He oftentimes miraculously and supernaturally intervenes in our lives. He is not watching us from a distance, but He is involved in our lives.

And He hears our prayers and He answers our prayers. And we're able to rejoice in the answered prayer, not because we got the thing that we asked for, whether it's a thing or whether it's a solution or an answer. It's not so much about that, but because it shows His care and His love and His faithfulness.

And so He's just confirming again, even when He answers the smallest little prayer, it's just confirming again, yes, He is there, and He has not left us, and He is concerned, and He is answering, and He is involved in our lives. And even when things don't go well, we rejoice because God is working all things for the good to them that love Him and are called according to His purpose. And so even if things go hard, we're able to rejoice because God is working in us.

God is shaping us. He is molding us. He is training us.

He is discipling us. He is making us like the Lord Jesus Christ. And so every trial we go through, we're able to say, this is a basis of rejoicing, not because we enjoy this trial, but because God is working through the trial and making me a little bit more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we're able to rejoice in all kinds of difficulties and all kinds of trials. And of course, this is something the world doesn't understand. And this is something that many Christians don't understand.

But when we get the picture, when we get the understanding that God is actually actively working in our lives to one purpose, and that purpose is to make us like Jesus, that we may be conformed to the image of His Son. When we understand that, every difficulty and every trial we go through is a basis of rejoicing. Thank you, Lord.

You're teaching me to trust you. You're teaching me to be patient. You're teaching me to whatever.

But it also, we are able to rejoice in our trials because it confirms our sonship. Remember Hebrews 12 says that those who are not chastened are not sons, but He chastens every son whom He receives. And so a sign of... We say, well, many unbelievers lost their houses in these last days.

Yes, but that's not God's chastening. That may be God speaking to them and trying to get their attention, but it's not God's chastening as such. But when the Christian experiences trials and difficulties, it is God allowing those things into our lives and it's a proof that He loves us because He is trying to draw us closer to Himself.

He's trying to teach us whatever it is that He's teaching us at the time. So we're able to rejoice in suffering. And you know, when I was going through this during this week as I was preparing, I was amazed how many verses, and I didn't make a note of it, but about six, seven, or eight verses throughout the New Testament speaks about rejoicing because of sufferings.

Not rejoicing in sufferings, but rejoicing because of sufferings. Remember in the book of Acts, right in the beginning of the book, they rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer for His sake. And so we're able to rejoice not just in suffering.

We're able to rejoice not despite or in spite of suffering, but we're able to rejoice because of suffering. Particularly if that suffering is for the sake of the gospel. Because whenever we suffer for the sake of the gospel, when you read the testimony of this man, the tremendous physical suffering that he endured for the sake of the gospel, Paul says that's a glorious thing because I've been counted worthy to share in the Lord Jesus' sufferings and to experience the same things that he experienced.

Or similar things for the sake of the body of Christ. We're able to rejoice because he promised, and this is number 12, because he promised, I will never leave you nor forsake you. I will never leave you nor forsake you.

You know, one of the realities in this life is that people are fickle. People change. I have had many, many friends who've turned against me at different times in my life.

But God has remained faithful and he will remain faithful. And he has promised, and remember the very first thing that we said, his character. His character is that he is unchanging, that he does not repent, that he does not change.

And so when he says, I will never leave you nor forsake you, that is an irrevocable promise that will never change. He will never revoke it. He will never take it back.

He said, I will never leave you nor forsake you. Of course, the problem is that we leave and forsake him and we go our own way. But he said, he will never leave us nor forsake you.

I think many of us have seen on the freeway, on the five, when you go just past, at the beginning of Burbank, there used to be a sign on the wall, which now has been painted over. Quite a pity, but it was, and it said, if God seems far away, guess who moved? If God seems far away, guess who moved? God never moves. He does not leave us.

He does not forsake us. And so if even this morning, you feel that God is far away, it's not because he is far away, it's because you're far away, because you've withdrawn from him. You've gone astray, and you're not where you need to be.

But he is where he is. He is always there, and he is always ready and available to us. I got myself lost.

We rejoice because of God's word. I think that many of us don't understand how many Christians in this world don't have the Bible. We don't have as many translations and copies of the Bible as we have.

We all probably all have it, not just in printed form, in many, many different versions on our shelves. But most of us, except Clayton, have it in our pockets on our phones. We have access to the word of God.

But it's not just the access to the word of God, but the fact that God has actually given us his word. And so it's not just, you know, we can rejoice over the fact that we have Bibles, but, you know, the fact that and that we have the physical word that we can read, and that we can study, and that we can memorize. That's a great reason to rejoice.

But behind that is also the reality that God has actually spoken to us and has given to us his word. He has not left us to our own devices to try and figure out. Remember, Paul speaks about the fact that God allows men to grope after him.

He hasn't left us in the dark to try and grope and say, well, you know, where is God? How is God? How can I be saved? But he has given us his word. And we're able to understand not just the way of salvation, but how we need to live and how we need to order our lives. And so he's given us his word and he has spoken to us.

Unfortunately, so many people in the world have what they believe to be their version of the word of God, whether it's in the form of their sacred writings. But those are the words of men. We know that they are.

They're clearly not inspired. And yet they seem to hold these things precious and they memorize them and they try and live by them. And yet it's so futile because it's not God who has spoken.

It's a man that has written these things. But we praise God that we have his word that has been given to us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as men of old wrote as they were moved along by the Holy Spirit. And so every scripture is given by inspiration of God.

And so we praise God for the power and the miracle of the word of God that is sharper than any two-edged sword and that is able to deal with the issues in our hearts and our lives that God has spoken to us. We don't need to go by feelings. We don't need to go by ideas or theories, but we're able to go by the sure, unchanging word of God.

We rejoice because we have the word of God. We rejoice because of the fellowship of the saints. I think that many Christians take it for granted that we can actually meet together in this way on a Sunday morning and on a Thursday and whenever we wish to without restraint from the government.

As we know, more Christians are persecuted today than are free. And so we rejoice in our liberties that we have to meet together. But even if we don't have those liberties, those Christians who find themselves in North Korea and in China and other parts of the world where they are suffering for the faith, they still rejoice in the body of Christ, that they have brothers and sisters who are touched by their sorrows and who rejoice when they rejoice.

And so we thank God for the body of Christ, not just the fact that we have fellowship, but that God has given to us leaders and teachers and those who have ministries to build us up and to encourage us and to help us along the way. Those in the body of Christ who are praying for us. As we said earlier, there are others who are praying for our service right now and we ought to be praying for others when they have their services and not just at those times, but in general, we need to be praying for.

And so we thank God for the body of Christ who's able to stand together not just in the local assembly, but in all of those churches that are born again or made up of born again believers. One of the things that I rejoice about particularly is that I'm born in the New Testament and not in the Old Testament. I know there are Christians who say, well, you know, I would have loved to have seen the Red Sea open.

Yeah, that's great. But we've seen the resurrection. We've seen the cross.

And while we haven't physically seen it, we have the account of those who have seen it. And it's something that is a reality. We have the Holy Spirit, which they did not have in the way that we have.

We have the Word of God that they did not have in the way that we have it. We have the mysteries that have been opened to us, the mystery of the church, the mystery of iniquity, the mystery of righteousness, many mysteries that have been revealed to us in the New Testament that was hidden in the Old

Testament, the mystery of the Gentiles who can now be born again and be part of the family of God, which they did not understand in the Old Testament. We have so many things.

We have the church, as we said earlier, they didn't have in the Old Testament. And so we are able to look back at the reality of the cross. We're able to look forward at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so we have a wonderful privilege, and I believe it's reason to rejoice that we are in the New Testament and not in the Old Testament. We rejoice, number 16, over sinners who get saved. Remember the angels in heaven rejoice over every sinner that comes to repentance.

And so we're able to rejoice over those who get born again today. I was tremendously touched on Friday night as I attended a Gideon function, and they spoke about the tremendous work they're doing. And Brother John Rattuno, many of us know, lives just down the street, sharing some of the places that he had been preaching in, and he's going to China in January.

We need to pray for him as he goes there. But not ones and twos, but hundreds and thousands of people coming to Christ. As a result of the gospel, of the work of the Gideons, and of others who are preaching the gospel.

And we rejoice over every single one who comes to repentance and comes to find Christ as Savior. And then number 17, my last one. You say, well, why 17? I don't know.

That's just where I stopped. We rejoice because of a promise of future glory. A promise of future glory.

The glass in the back, the cross and the crown. There is a crown coming. There is a day coming when our salvation will be complete.

When our bodies will be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye. There'll be no more pain, no more suffering, no more dying. There'll be no more sorrow and tears.

We'll be glorified and we will be like the Lord Jesus. The whole thing will be completed. Everything that was undone in the Garden of Eden, as we've been hearing in Sunday school.

Everything that was lost will finally be restored. And the glory will be revealed in the sons of God. The whole earth, remember, is travailing for the manifestation of the sons of God.

The day that we will be like Jesus in every way, not just spiritually, but in every way. When sin will no longer be an issue for us. When temptation will no longer be a problem.

When we will be able to see him face to face. Now we see through a glass darkly. Then we will see face to face.

We rejoice that there is a day coming when all of this will be complete. And when our trials will be over. Our temptations will be over.

Our sufferings and difficulties, whatever they may be, will be over. And we will live in eternal rejoicing and bliss in his presence. Father, we pray that as we have looked at some of the many reasons why we ought to be rejoicing, that we will indeed be a rejoicing people.

Lord, that we may remind ourselves every moment of the day to rejoice always. Lord, as the verse says, not just to rejoice, but to rejoice always. In every time, in every situation, whether good or bad.

And so Lord, we pray that we've said many, many things this morning, Lord. And 17 reasons, and there are probably 170 more. But Lord, we pray that you'd help us to remember the reasons we have to rejoice.

And that we would be obedient to your word. That we may not be like the people of Israel, grumbled and complained and moaned and groaned, and always were dissatisfied and disgruntled. But Lord, that we may be a rejoicing people because you've been exceedingly gracious to us.

We pray that you'd help us, Lord. That we may indeed bring glory to you in our attitude and in our response of rejoicing. Because of what you have done and because of who you are.

Help us, we pray, Lord, as we go into this week, that we may put these things into practice, Lord. Tomorrow as we go into our jobs, Lord, as we deal with traffic congestion, as we deal with difficult colleagues and difficult supervisors and clients and all the stuff that we have to deal with in our daily life. Pray, Lord, that we may in those things show the world that we have something they do not have.

And that is the ability to rejoice. Always. Help us, we pray, Lord.

We pray that you'd go with us, keep us, protect us, bring us together again safely on Thursday. In Jesus' name we pray.

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