



Rockwood Church of Christ

The Proclaimer

March 8, 2020

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Service Times:

Sunday

Bible Study 10 am
Worship Service 10:45 am
Worship Service 6 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:00 pm

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Reasons to Rejoice!

The Bible speaks a number of times regarding rejoicing. David once stated, *“This is the day which the Lord has made,”* and then he added, *“We will rejoice and be glad in it”* (**Ps. 118:24**).

Why isn’t that just as true today as the day David wrote it? A celebrated writer once wrote, “Every new day is a miracle.” The point: “the Lord did not owe us another day, but He gave it to us.”

In the days of Nehemiah, when the people of God had combined their efforts in a great cause, they were coaxed to rejoice, and were reminded: *“the joy of the Lord is your strength”* (**Neh. 8:10**). Then the people responded with great rejoicing *“because they now understood the words that had been made known to them”* (**Neh. 8:12**).

Even in the shadow of the hideous cross, Jesus told the disciples, *“Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world”* (**John 16:33**). Of course, they were not glad that Jesus had to suffer so, but were to rejoice at the happy results—their redemption (**cf. Eph. 1:7; Rom. 3:24-25**).

It is recorded of the early church that they *“received their food with glad and generous hearts”* (**Acts 2:46, ESV**).

In the marvelous book of Philippians, we read that Paul counseled Christians to *“rejoice in the Lord”* (**Phil. 3:1**); and then a chapter later repeated, *“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say rejoice”* (**Phil. 4:4**). The Thessalonians were instructed similarly, to *“rejoice always”* (**1 Thess. 5:16**).

What a wonderful reason Jesus gave the early disciples to rejoice when He said, *“rejoice that your names are written in heaven”* (**Luke 10:20**).

Have we ever thought that when we are told to *“rejoice,”* that it implies making a conscious effort to do so? Happiness is not automatic—it’s a choice!

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (**Phil. 4:4**)

Joe Goodspeed

Christians and Lethal Force

Much has been said in recent days about the “church shooting” in Texas on Sunday, December 29, 2019 – the right and wrong of it. The initial shooter was clearly wrong. He was evil incarnate, whose history of bad choices ended in a final bad choice to take innocent human life. God’s judicial standard played out in textbook fashion: *“Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in His own image”* (**Gen. 9:6**).

Which raises the question, “Is lethal force ever justified?” We are not addressing the war question or whether a Christian can be a cop. Most Christians, I assume, would not object to such, based on **Romans 13** and the role of civil government. But what about individual Christians? Is it ever right for a Christian to take the life of another human being?

If killing is motivated by personal hatred, anger, jealousy, or revenge, the answer is clearly ‘no’, for those passions are themselves sinful, and any behavior flowing from them would be sinful as well (**Matt. 15:18-19; Gal. 5:19-21, etc**).

But note carefully God’s reason for justifying the use of deadly force in **Genesis 9**: *“for God made man in His own image.”* The reason a murderer deserved to die was not because his life had no value, but because the life of his innocent victim did.

That principle carried forward to the Mosaic age. Though the sixth command said, *“Thou shalt not kill”* (**Ex 20:13**), other laws justified the use of lethal force, both judicially (**21:14**) and individually (**22:2**). The unspoken reason for such provisions was clear: the life of the innocent victim, created in the image of God, had value.

The same principle is true today. We, too, are created in the image of God with great worth. No wonder that God, in the New Testament age, retained capital punishment as a just response to evil (**Rom. 13:4; Acts 25:11**).

But what about Christians? Although Jesus condemned the use of armed force to further the kingdom (**Matt. 26:51-54; John 18:36**), He actually commanded the apostles to arm themselves (**Luke 22:35-39**). Those swords were not used to defend against persecution (**Acts 12:1-3**). So, what purpose did they serve? They would have certainly deterred evil threats against their lives in their numerous evangelistic journeys.

Some push back, *“Turn the other cheek”* (**Matt. 5:39**). But this was spoken concerning vengeance (**vs 38**); and protecting innocent life is not taking vengeance. Others say, *“Love your neighbor”* (**Matt. 22:39**). To which we reply, “Exactly!” Is it “loving” for a man to allow an intruder to kill his neighbor, rape his wife, and sell his daughter into slavery? Pity the poor family whose head interprets love this way. **First Timothy 5:8** is not just about food.

Lethal force does not negate trust in God. David trusted God even as he picked up the stones for his sling. The Psalmist wrote, *“Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked”* (**Psa. 82:4**). So, let’s do that!

Warren King