



# DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

## Third Sunday of Advent (B) – 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

**Focus:** *Rejoice, Pray and Give Thanks*

### **word of life**

**“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NRSV)

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

During the first two weeks of Advent, we hear important reminders to prepare and stay awake for the second coming of Christ. By the Third Sunday of Advent, the joy of the coming of Christ shines through the lectionary. The coming of Christ is not something to fear, but embrace. Thus, on the Third Sunday of Advent, many churches light the pink (rose) candle in the advent wreath – the candle of joy.

1. *What do you know about using pink on the Third Sunday of Advent?*
2. *How might the second coming of Christ be a joyful event?*

Paul’s words ring out, “Rejoice always!” Keep in mind, Paul writes his letter to the Thessalonians while in jail. He is uncertain about his own future. Perhaps he may be facing his own death. Prison is not the typical place to promote joy, but Paul is not confined by prison or his circumstances. His faith in Christ allows him to see God at work in all places.

Rejoicing is not reserved for Christmas Eve or only the good times of life. As Christians in the Northern Hemisphere, we dare light a pink candle in the middle of winter and the darkest of our days.

3. *What of our faith allows – even encourages – Christians to “rejoice always”?*
4. *Why is it significant that Paul writes these words from jail?*

With clarity, Paul summarizes God’s will for this beloved congregation. He writes the will of God in Christ Jesus is manifested in three ways:

- JOY: Rejoice always
- PRAYER: Pray without ceasing
- THANKS: Give thanks in all circumstances

When we think of God’s will, it is tempting to try to steer God’s will to our way of thinking. Often our prayers reflect *our* desires, *our* suggestions, and *our* preferences for God. Certainly we pray for God’s will to be done, but we are not always ready for it. Instead, we prefer to give advice to God on running the world – or at least our slice of life.

5. *How do you define God’s will?*
6. *What are the implications that God’s will for you includes a life of joy, prayer and thanksgiving?*
7. *How do you discern God’s will?*

Paul prays for God’s peace, a peace that sanctifies the whole person. Like in Paul’s letter (1 Corinthians 1:3-9) read on the First Sunday of Advent, Paul prays that followers of Christ be kept blameless (1 Thessalonians 5:23) until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Let it be so.

## **word among us**

Maggie's refrigerator was covered with magnets containing photos, advertisements, and memorable phrases. Years ago, she loved all the variety on her refrigerator. But lately, her refrigerator seemed messy and chaotic, a lot like her life. She knew it was time to simplify.

And then it happened. One morning, Maggie was reading her devotions and the Scripture jumped off the page. There was something about the simplicity of Paul's words found in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 which resonated with her. She had found her focus:

- Rejoice always.
- Pray without ceasing.
- Give thanks in all circumstances.

Maggie carefully printed those three phrases on a poster and put them on the refrigerator. She wanted to read them every day and tried to live them as well.

1. *What is compelling about these three phrases from Paul?*
2. *What phrases from Scripture help focus your attention on Christ?*

Paul encourages us to live a non-stop continuous flow of joy, prayer, and thanks. From the moment we wake until we sleep, we are to live with uninterrupted joy, prayer, and thanks.

3. *Describe what it would be like to live with uninterrupted joy, prayer, and thanksgiving?*
4. *What prevents us from living such a life?*

## **faith practice in daily life**

**Serve all people following the example of Jesus.**

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and give thanks in all circumstances." (1Thessalonians 5:16 NRSV) Paul's concluding words to the Thessalonians sound more like a commissioning. Paul wants his followers to hold a certain attitude as they move forward in faith.

5. *Who do you know lives such a life?*
6. *What is it like to be around that person?*
7. *How would your life change if you fully embraced these three attitudes?*

As Christmas nears, consider giving yourself a present. Set aside some time when you can prayerfully reflect upon Paul's commissioning. Take time to write these words:

- Rejoice always.
- Pray without ceasing.
- Give thanks in all circumstance.

Make a commitment to repeat those phrases each day until Christmas.

### **Prayer**

Creator of all, give to each of us a heart filled with joy, a spirit ready to pray, and a voice full of thanks.  
Amen

### ***last word***

Rejoice always.  
Pray without ceasing.  
Give thanks in all circumstances.

#### *Daily Faith Practices*

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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