



new life fellowship

**Sermon Title: Choosing Joy: Joyful Confidence**

**Speaker: Richard Villodas, Lead Pastor**

**Scripture: Philippians 3:1-7**

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh - though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

*Philippians 3:1-7 (NIV)*

#### **Sermon Outline:**

On this Pentecost Sunday, we see parts of our country in flames. Pentecost is when we remember the flames of the Holy Spirit resting on the heads of Jesus' disciples. Today we see our country up in flames because of our rage, our pain and our need for justice. The flames of the Holy Spirit are given to extinguish the fires of injustice.

We are to see Pentecost for what it truly is: it is an annual reminder that God has given the church the Holy Spirit to mark us to be witnesses to Jesus' Kingdom of love, justice and reconciliation.

Paul is addressing a problem that has been repeated for 2000 years. He turns into pastoral Paul and warns them about something that can put their church in jeopardy and things that will take away the church's joys.

Identity markers of the time were ethnicity and religious performance which distinguished the people of God. Paul says that your national, ethnic or religious identity does not make you right with God -- what Christ has done on your behalf is what makes you right with God. Paul rejects the identity markers, and says the hierarchies mean nothing, what makes us right with God is not identity markers, but the marks on Jesus body. The true city on the hill, the salt of the earth are the followers of Christ, not any nation or particular ethnicity.

We need to be reminded of this because history has a way of repeating itself. You cannot see others as inferior and be in a right relationship with Christ or do the work of God. We have been socialized to see black men and women as inferior through society and our extended family. Being in close proximity to blackness does not mean you understand what it's like to be black.

The sin of racism is antithetical to the Gospel. You cannot change what you are not willing to confront. Racism needs to be addressed individually, interpersonally, and institutionally. In order to move forward in the power of the Holy Spirit you need to identify how you have been socialized.

Joy is a defiant act of resistance against the forces of despair. – Willie James Jennings

How do I rejoice in the Lord during the current Covid19 pandemic and the pandemic of public racism? To rejoice in Lord doesn't mean you have to walk around with a smile on your face or be happy all the time. God is on the side of those experiencing injustice. God is not neutral, God sides with those who are on the margin, those who have been oppressed and those who are being overlooked. Because the Lord is with you, you are able to rejoice. Rejoice in the Lord!

Those who are black should know God celebrates your blackness with you. We are all made in the image of God!

**Sermon Summary:**

This Sunday, Pastor Rich continues our series through the book of Philippians. Today Pastor Rich talks about “joy killers” that come in the form of misplaced confidence. We will see how to place our confidence in the right things that produce joy.

**Sermon Questions:**

1. How does this scripture connect for you the topic that was discussed today? What words resonate with you? Why?
2. In your family of origin, what national/ethnic identifiers were you told you belonged to? How was that practiced/carried out?
3. What signs do you notice Paul stating to be weary of from stealing joy? What similar things can you relate to today?
4. What stories and scripts have you been told about blacks or others that hinder your ability to see them fully as children of God?
5. Paul says to rejoice in the Lord. How do you do this during these difficult times? What does that look like in your life?