

*Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone.
The Lord is near. Philippians 4*

Joy in Christ is a way of life for all followers of Jesus. When we chose joy, we also chose hope. Hope draws us to gratitude and gratitude is the foundation of peace that all will be well. John Lennon said, "everything will be okay in the end and if it's not okay, it's not the end."

Despair is the opposite of joy. Despair moves us to despondency, alienation, and hopelessness. Paul teaches us not to "...worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving (to) let your requests be made known to God."

Letting God know our supplication with gratitude is holy interaction, and inter-action is engagement and action. When I let someone in authority know that something is not right or not working, I am being a good citizen. I am claiming my agency as opposed to passively observing. Citizenship works best when citizens are aware and work to be part of the solution. Growing up in India as a child, I would randomly pick up paper trash while walking on the sidewalk. It was my way of praying for a cleaner city. Every act of agency is a prayer making things known to God by doing something about it. From cleaner streets to supporting my worshipping missional community, to gun safety, alleviating poverty, climate change, racial healing; everything is possible when we live as we pray. Thoughts and prayers are never passive for followers of Jesus.

Being joyful and practicing gentleness are connected because when we are joyful, we evoke confidence that God is near despite intimidations of violence and abuse of power around us. We are not alone in this. Wisdom and courage from books on our shelves, in our phones and in our minds are the cloud of witnesses who compass us about when despair could easily set in. Joy is protesting against overwhelming odds while trusting in God and doing something about it.

- Joy is protesting against scarcity through acts of courage and boundless generosity.
- Joy is protesting to create slivers of heaven on earth by giving and forgiving generously.
- Joy is creating things of beauty when things get ugly.
- Joy is embracing music amidst the cacophony of crassness, and all forms of violence.
- Joy is protesting against the powers of death by embracing the presence of God.

The most significant gift of joy is embracing a deep and abiding peace because of the confidence that everything will be okay in the end and if it's not okay, it's not the end.

"...And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4.

Almighty and gracious Maker of all, we give you thanks for the fruits of the earth in their season and for the labors of those who harvest them. Make us, we pray, faithful stewards of your great bounty, for the provision of our necessities and the relief of all who are in need, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Thank you for your acts of generosity!

Happy Thanksgiving! Be a blessing!!!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A.L.S.' followed by a stylized flourish.