

The Lord is Near

By Jennifer Brown

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Philippians 4:4-5

Last week while I was out shopping, I gave in to a box of Cracker Jacks in the check-out line calling my name. The funny thing about Cracker Jacks, though, is that I don't know anyone who eats it for the popcorn. Each decade brings drier popcorn with less caramel coating. It is simply something you have to get through and put up with while you work your way to the bottom of the box to the true prize – those yummy peanuts.

Sometimes I find myself treating my life the same way, as something that I just have to get through and put up with while I wait for the true prize – eternity.

Philippians 4:4 gives me pause though because we are supposed to not only rejoice in this life, but to rejoice *always*. So many things in life do not lend themselves to rejoicing: homelessness, addictions, depression, murder, suicide, child abuse, cancer, genocide...I'll stop there; I'm sure you get the point.

How are we to rejoice always when we live in a world filled with these things?

The answer is found in the next verse, "The Lord is near."

I don't know what problems you are facing today, what burdens you are carrying, or what is pressing in on you. But I do know that the Lord is near. I know that He is our ever-present help in times of trouble. I know His right hand holds us tight. I know that He is our strength and our refuge. I know that He is our rock and will not let our feet slip. I know that He can do all things. Most importantly, I know that when we are His, nothing, no nothing, can separate us from His love.

He is near and in that we rejoice. Not because life is great, not because we received a promotion, not because we are healthy. We rejoice because God is good and He is near. And even though we are among dry popcorn with a thin coating, we can still rejoice. We can praise God. We can give Him thanksgiving. We can find joy now, even before we get to that wonderful thing that is coming next.

Philippians 4:4-9

⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!* ⁵ *Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.* ⁶ *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* ⁷ *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

⁸ *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

⁹ *Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*

A note for some of you...If you are not His, if you have not given your life over to Jesus and accepted Him as your savior, then this life is as good as it will get for you. But you can change that; there is hope! The Lord is near. You only need to turn to Him. [Click here for more information.](http://www.hopeintheLord.org)