

Intersections March 14 2019

Scripture: Philippians 4:4-8

The World Can't Take It Away

In his March 8 *Still Speaking* devotional entitled, "The Choice to Rejoice," Matt Laney interpreted a scripture from his point of view. While I endorsed his conclusions, my soul ached to complete his tapestry with threads from my own culture, background, and being.

Sources of negativity lurk all around us these days. Bad news bombards us:

Political dissention

Violence and brutality

Celebrities behaving badly

Lies dressed up as truth

Armageddon predictions

Desires for instant fame at the expense of others

The way I see it, the world conspires to frustrate us, anger us, defeat us, or sadden us. But during this Lenten season, I have chosen to rebel against such stressors. My Lenten sacrifice is to give up things that cause dis-quietness in my spirit.

In these sacred days of reflection and sacrifice, I choose to BE quietly with my thoughts and feelings, reflections and musings, either in complete silence or with soft music playing in the background. After a while, the distress vaporizes, as I sit in the presence of my God who has given me the gift of joy just because God loves me. In God's presence, my joy rises, like a prayer, in my spirit.

My foremothers used to describe the phenomenon of joy: "The world didn't give it to you. The world can't take it away," they declared in defiance. Who knew? Blessed quietness as an act of rebellion! Stillness as an act of Holy Resistance!

In his letter to the Philippians (4:4-8, NRSV), the Apostle Paul expresses a similar idea:

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Prayer

Holy God, when we come into your presence during this Lenten season, help us to rejoice in the midst of turmoil. Help us to neutralize the woes of the world with the wonders of your grace. Help us to know your joy – for the world did not give it to us, and the world cannot take it away. In all things, we give your glory. Amen.