Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

 I am going to guess that you have heard these words or very similar words on a regular basis for most of your Christian life. These words are a part of a doxology, words giving praise to the Lord but please also note that these words are also a blessing pronounced upon and given to the people, not just those living in Philippi but to all of those people who would have read this epistle of the Lord.

 Let just take a few moments and take in what these words say. First, these words remind you of the peace of God. This peace is not as the world gives but is of and from God. God is the author, the producer and the sustainer of this peace. God owns it and shares it. Just think of that. God has this peace, peace he shares and grants to you and me.

 Clearly in the way that these words are written we are being reminded of the fact that this peace of God is also ours because God shares it. We have it in our midst. We experience it and are affected by it. This peace is the calm and serenity, the hope and comfort, the strength and wisdom of God. This peace is the calm in a storm, the hope in despair, or if you need, it is the light at the end of a tunnel.

 But grasp even more. Please note that we are told that this peace of God, **“transcends all understanding.”** In this case the word transcend means be of more value, it is better than, it surpasses and is far above understanding. What understanding? All of it. In actuality this word is the general word for mind. The peace of God is above, beyond and more valuable than anything of the human mind. In other words, God’s peace is greater than our wisdom, logic, thinking, discernment, purpose, attitude and intention. All of those things of man are to yield to, to subordinate themselves the wonder and marvel of God because if you don’t do that, then you will never grasp the peace that God has offered and is freely giving to every one of his children. And please note that this idea of understanding is qualified with the word “all.” Every aspect of man’s mind is subject to and needs to yield to the greatness and goodness of God.

 And then note the true wonder and joy of this peace for ourselves. Our passage says to us, **“if guards your hearts and minds.”** Again awesome words. The word “guard” can also mean: keep watch over, protect and hold prisoner.” Our hearts and minds, really our very beings are being guarded, yes protected and watched over by the Lord. And although many would wince at the thought of “being held prisoner” I do not. I thing more in terms of “being held in protective custody.” God takes you in, surrounds you with his love and works hard to make sure that no harm comes to you from the evil world.

 Finally note that all of this, the peace, the transcending, the guarding…all of that is **“In Christ Jesus.”** Jesus is the heart of our faith and life. Jesus provides all the answers and in many cases helps us even form the questions that need to be answered by Him. Jesus is our protector, guardian, and our Savior in each and every way. It is his life and redemptive work that has brought all of this about. To truly have this goodness, this stillness and calm, this peace of God we need to have a grasp and handle on Jesus and in Jesus we have a complete handle on the majesty and grace of the Father and Holy Spirit.

 Did I give you a sense of this wonder of what is before us? Did I begin to help you understand the greatness and salvation of the Lord our God? Let’s you and I continue to look at the words and encouragement in front of us under this theme: **THE WONDER OF THE LORD!**

 If you want to grasp the sense of wonder that I am speaking of then let’s just back up and take a good look at the opening words of our text. We read, **“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again; Rejoice!”** In a world that is obsessed with joy and gladness, with happiness and having the good life, I don’t grasp why anyone would not look at and thoroughly work at grasping what is said here. Do you want joy? Do you want that sense of happiness that seems to escape the entire world? Then why wouldn’t you look to the Lord our God? He is the one who supplies all the answers and in those answer is found the joy, the rejoicing that we so insistently want.

 But of course, the world does not get this. The world promotes an artificial and shallow type of joy. Why if we could just have enough money or win that contest or find that one special love. The movies are full of such things, and paint rosy and wonderful pictures how life could be it we all just worked together and were filled with love. But the truth of the matter is that the world is a pretty harsh place. I would wish that every member would take God and Jesus to heart and would display a strong and sure faith…but that isn’t the reality. I would wish that every marriage would be smooth and care free, that love and compassion, understanding and being completely supportive would be the norm once you said, “I do.” But that is not reality. Marriage is hard work and I can guarantee that you will step on each other’s toes and bring hurt to our hearts simply because we are sinful humans with stresses and strains in a world that is brutal. I could go on and on in this way.

 And yet, I want you to grasp that God, through his Apostle, tells us and encourages us in rejoicing! Just in the way this is written you can understand that the Lord is being adamant about the issue. You rejoice! You rejoice because you can! You rejoice no matter what is going on or no matter how you perceive or grasp things. You rejoice because this rejoicing comes from the Lord our God. He is the cause of rejoicing. He is the one who will and does give joy. And I want you to know that this rejoicing of God is just like God’s peace….it surpasses what the world offers. It is not flighty and shallow. It is a forever rejoicing because the Lord himself and his promises are forever.

 The next encouragement of our text is just as wonderful. **“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”** Here again is a powerful encouragement to us. The idea of gentleness is pretty vast. The word has all of these nuances to it: gentle, forbearing, considerate, fair, suitable, moderate and reasonable. How we approach life is important. And to help us in this endeavor, we are reminded of one true fact, **“The Lord is near.”** You want to keep your behavior in check, then before you ever do or say anything you remember that God, the Lord our God is standing right there next to you listening and watching. Are you going to yell and curse at you wife or kid with Jesus himself right there? Are you going to be out of control, rude, in your face and belligerent? Would you be that way before the throne of God? Yet, God is there and God is watching. Take on the attitude and strength of Jesus. He was firm but loving. He was considerate and yet truthful. He was gentle and yet you have to grasp that he could have at any time, caused his enemies and tormenters to simply disappear to hell forever. Instead, Jesus died for us.

 Our next encouragement: **“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your request to God.”** Boy, if there is a piece of advice that the world needs it is right here. **“Do not be anxious.”** Stop being stressed out. You realize that in many cases you are stressed because you do not have confidence and trust in God? God has told us that He is with us. God has told us that He will never give us more than with can bear. God has clearly taught that He is working in your life for your eternal good and salvation! Don’t you believe Him?

 Again the other day in our weekday Bible class we were looking at and contemplating the words of the book of Hebrews. Chapter 12 is so awesome. It is a chapter that reminds us the fact that God is looking out for us and striving to make sure eternal life and salvation is ours. But it is also a chapter that says, **“God disciplines those he loves.”** God may allow hardship into your life and if He does, God wants you to grasp that He is doing it for your good and salvation. This chapter also freely admits this: **“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.”** Think of your own life. Do you think you have gotten where you are without discipline? Your parents and those around you worked hard to teach you to do right and to be a productive member of society. If you are a success it is because of the discipline you have learned in your life. With God it is always perfect discipline. He wasn’t guessing about what you needed. God knew perfectly what would be best.

 The other awesome aspect of this verse is that it clearly tells us that God gives us an avenue to address him. It is called prayer. We can take our troubles, woes, struggles, joys, victories, anxious moments…yes, we can take everything to the Lord. Prayer is a wonderful gift of God that welcomes us to speak to him and voice our concerns. Now, please note, do not by the world’s false teaching in this gift of God. First, prayer is not powerful, God is powerful and God can, will and does hear and note your prayer. Also note that God is not going to mystically answer you. You are not going to feel or hear or have God whisper in your ear. Seriously, point out one passage that guarantees that to you and I in today’s world. In truth, God does and will supply the answer in His Word, yes, in the Bible where God has revealed all things necessary for our eternal life and salvation. Nor should you “listen to your heart.” Dear people, our hearts are tainted and stained with sin. Listening to your heart is like trying to dance to static on the radio! Listen to God’s Word, that’s the better choice.

 So, too much stress and anxiety? Then ask God to help you trust and lean on Him more. Ask God for a stronger faith and better understanding of His will and ways. Stop relying on yourself and your own wisdom.

 At this point we are now back to the way this section wraps up: The peace of God. Do you know where that peace comes from? It comes from the marvel and wonder of Jesus. We are in that season of the church year where we celebrate the birth and coming of our Savior into the world. Can we truly grasp the awe of God’s son born of a virgin, born into our world for our sake and salvation? Can we grasp that Jesus came into this world to live the perfect life we could not? To grasp that Jesus went to the cross, there to suffer the pangs of eternal damnation for every one of our sins? Jesus suffered and died for us, an act of love that I think most of us, including myself, have trouble grasping. The depth and power of what Jesus has done for us is in many ways something I cannot fully and completely understand. But that’s okay. What I do grasp and understand is awesome. What I do understand is that Jesus paid for my sins and because of that payment, eternal life and salvation belongs to all who believe.

 And to make sure that we know this message of redemption is for us, Jesus then rose from the dead and then ascended into heaven. Jesus is now the Lord of lords and all things, all authority has been given to Him. Yet his plea to us is so simple. Just believe what I have done for you. Believe that you are forgiven because I paid the ransom price of life. Believe that you are my child because I have called you and given you the precious and awesome gift of faith.

 But remember, God is the one who defines and determines faith. Faith hates sin. You cannot claim faith and be a lover of sin or a person who has declared that my sin is my right and Jesus you will either forgive me or else. That is the “lost in trespass” attitude. Faith is lead to true repentance. To understand that my actions in thought, word and deed have offended the majesty of God and have earned me damnation. Faith then clings to the promise that in Jesus I will be lead to hate sin, stop especially those pet sins, and cling to Jesus for forgiveness. And Jesus does forgive. That’s the peace of God. That’s the very thing that surpasses the ways of the world. That’s the thing that causes us to rejoice, be gentle and cast all our troubles upon Him. Jesus forgives us. Jesus sends us the Holy Spirit to give us faith and thus everything in this section becomes our in Jesus.

 Lord, I pray that my words help your people grasp the wonder of Jesus. I pray that the joy of salvation and the peace you offer is found in our hearts and minds. Amen.