

Shipwrecked

“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”

Philippians 4:4 (NIV)

Ernest Hemingway (1899-1961), an American, was a truly great twentieth century writer. In high school I read his magnificent novel, *The Old Man and the Sea*, written in 1952. At the time it was a relatively new novel.

The story line was the battle between an old man and the sea, in which he both lost and won the fight. Hemingway earned the Pulitzer Prize for the novel in 1952 and when he earned the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1954, this volume was referred to in the presentation of the prize.

So Hemingway was a world renowned individual in his chosen profession. He went through several marriages, went on African safaris for big game, fished the oceans, and seemed to live the good life. Yet he made a curious statement: “Happiness in intelligent people is the rarest thing I know.” The tragic shipwreck of his life came at his own hand using one of his various guns.

In life and in death, Hemingway was proof of his statement about intelligent people being unhappy.

Yet for all his unsuccessful pursuit of happiness, many intelligent people in every generation discover happiness. Martin Luther, who was a full time university professor, full time writer and a full time pastor, had a hilarious sense of humor and people loved to be with him. He was a truly happy man.

One of the greatest minds in history is Albert Einstein. The most famous photo of him is one in which he stuck out his tongue at

the camera. Einstein also enjoyed laughing and making others laugh, as well.

Hemingway was indeed an intelligent – though unhappy – man. However, his observation that intelligence prevents happiness simply does not square with the facts. There does not seem to be any necessary relationship between the two.

When it comes to Christianity, however, there is a very direct relationship between love for God and joy, or happiness. Indeed the Bible again and again calls on the people of God to rejoice. It is as though some Christians manage to keep their joy to themselves and need encouragement to let loose and show the world how happy they are, that their sins are forgiven, and they have a great hope in the future.

Never would I seek to minimize the suffering through which some Christians go. As a pastor I witness just how sorrowful some believers’ lot is in life. Yet, when push comes to shove, we find ourselves humming some jubilant hymn or chorus, or whistling a hymn sung last Lord’s day in the house of God. The words of Charles Wesley’s hymn, *Rejoice the Lord is King*, give us lots of reasons to sing in trials – as the apostles sang at midnight when thrown into prison Acts 26:24-26.

Read this remarkable hymn and let your heart soak up the glorious views of our great God and Saviour found in this hymn. The more we see of the Lord the greater He appears on the horizon and the

smaller our problems become.

Rejoice, the Lord is King;
your sovereign Lord adore;
give thanks, O mortals, sing
and triumph ever more.
Lift up your heart;
lift up your voice; rejoice,
again I say, rejoice.

For Christ the Saviour reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when Jesus purged our stains,
he took his seat above.
Lift up your heart;
lift up your voice; rejoice,
again I say, rejoice.

His reign can never fail;
he rules o’er earth and heaven:
the keys of death and hell
are to our Saviour given.
Lift up your heart;
lift up your voice; rejoice,
again I say, rejoice.

He sits at God’s right hand
till all his foes submit
and bow to his command
and fall beneath his feet.
Lift up your heart;
lift up your voice; rejoice,
again I say, rejoice.

Rejoice in glorious hope,
for Christ the judge shall come
and take the faithful up
to their eternal home.
We soon shall hear
the archangel’s voice;
the trump of God shall sound:
rejoice.

Charles Wesley

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