

Philippians 4: 4-9

*“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice! Let everyone see your gentleness. The Lord is near! **Do not be worried** about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God. And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is worthy of respect, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if something is excellent or praiseworthy, think about these things. And what you learned and received and heard and saw in me, do these things. And the God of peace will be with you.”*

Have you ever been worried about something and expressed that to a friend or family member only to be told, “Oh, don’t worry. It’ll be all right”? Ever seen a five-year old child cry about a broken toy and the parent say something like, “Don’t cry, it’s just a toy...we can get another one”? These are well-intentioned ways in which feelings are discouraged and discounted and even disapproved and disallowed. How much better if the friend or family member was to say something like, “Really? Tell me more,” or if the parent were to say something like, “You really loved that toy didn’t you. I’m sad, too.”

Emotions are not more powerful or valuable than thoughts, but they are of equal value. The way to deal constructively with emotions is to explore them in an open, safe environment, rather than deny them or try to control them with our rationality, our thinking. The reality is we cannot completely control our thinking though many people live in the illusion that they can and do. People who are utterly convinced of this are usually the ones whose feelings were long ago discounted and disapproved and disallowed.

One of the clearest places where we see how we cannot control our thoughts is our dream world.

I had a dream the other day. I had just come out of the shower and had a towel wrapped around me. While using a pin wheel to blow dry my hair, I heard a strange noise outside. I quickly got dressed in a fluorescent yellow tank top and black leather pants. I ran outside, and as I was running the heavy leather pants chafed the inside of my thighs.

When I got outside, I heard a strange noise above my head. It was a very small, just beyond toy-sized helicopter repeatedly bumping into the upstairs bathroom window. It would bang into the window, back up, and then bang into it again.

There was a tiny, tiny rabbit piloting the tiny helicopter.

I yelled, “Hey! What are you doing?”

The rabbit looked down but continued flying into the window.

I yelled again, “Why are you banging into the window?”

“Window?” the rabbit said perplexed. “I thought this was the magic passageway to Nirvana.”

“No,” I said, “I’ve had some good moments in there, but Nirvana it’s not. It’s just a bathroom.”

At this the tiny helicopter slowly descended towards me, landing by my ankle. The rabbit got out of the helicopter, and he rose up on his hind feet and said, “Allow me to introduce myself. I am major rigor mortis rabbit the third of the royal narcissism air force.”

Bending down on my knees to see and hear him better, I said, “Did you say, Rigor Mortis Rabbitt the third?”

“Indeed,” he said, “I come from a long line of distinguished rigor mortises.”

“I see.”

Then he asked, “Well, do you know the way to Nirvana?”

“Look,” I said, “I’m wearing a fluorescent yellow tank top with black leather pants that chafe, and I blow dry my hair with this here pin wheel. Do I look like someone who knows the way to Nirvana?”

“You have a point: Guess not,” said rigor mortis rabbitt.

At that very instant, the ground beneath us began to shake and we heard what sounded like ominous thunder only more rhythmic and continuous. We turned and looked down Highway 94 south, and there, coming up from Frelinghuysen, were thousands and thousands of chipmunks marching on their hind legs in tiny combat boots with metal taps. They were dressed in camouflaged military uniforms. They were each marching with a small rifle in one paw and a walnut in the other paw.

Then, the army of chipmunks stopped just in front of my house. The leader of the march, standing up in a small atv that was driving him ahead of the army, he wore a special helmet, on the front of which were inscribed the words, "Chief Nut."

Rigor Mortis Rabbitt the third and I made our way to Hwy. 94 in front of my house, and when they were close enough I yelled, asking Chief Nut what was the meaning of this army of marching chipmunks.

"Halt!" he called, and with that the atv and the thousands of chipmunks came to a stop. Chief Nut got out of his vehicle and came over to the side of the road where I was, and I bent down to hear his reply.

"We're marching to Zion," he said, "Only five miles to go."

"Five miles?" I questioned. "Five miles will not put you in Zion! Five miles will only get you to Newton, New Jersey."

The Chief Nut looked me up and down. It was then I noticed I was still holding the multi-colored pin wheel in my hand.

"Do you think we'd trust the word of someone who is dressed like you and who's holding a pin wheel?" asked the Chief Nut.

"I suppose not," I said.

And with that, Chief Nut got back into his tiny atv and gave the order to continue marching, and they did so with rhythmic robustness.

The rabbit and I stood there watching until they were beyond sight. Then, suddenly, a mighty wind blew furiously from the southwest, so much so,

that the pin wheel in my hand turned so fast I was lifted off the ground and into the air.

I was flying north eastward right over the beautiful Northern Catalpa tree next to the church. Then I was flying over Hunt's Lake, and at that moment the wind ceased as suddenly as it began. I plummeted into the water of Hunt's Lake, and I sank all the way to the bottom of the lake.

The leather pants became so heavy with water that I couldn't swim back to the surface; but amazingly I could still breathe and talk. There was a school of fish down there having a meeting. Each fish wore a Hawaiian shirt and sun glasses. They each had a tiny suitcase in one fin, and two pieces of paper in the other fin. On the outside of the papers was written the word "ticket."

I asked the fish closest to me, "What's the meaning of this? Why are you all dressed like that?"

The fish looked scornfully at me and said, "Why are we dressed like this? Look at yourself!"

Insulted, I turned to another fish and asked, "What are the papers each of you has?"

This fish replied, "We each have two tickets to paradise."

And as soon as he said this, some guy by the name of Eddie Money appeared from behind a rock. He had a guitar, and he began to sing:

Got a surprise especially for you,
Something that both of us have always wanted to do.
We've waited so long, waited so long.
We've waited so long, waited so long.

I'm gonna take you on a trip so far from here,
I've got two tickets in my pocket, now baby, we're gonna disappear.
I've got two tickets to paradise,
Won't you pack your bags, we'll leave tonight,
I've got two tickets to paradise,
Won't you pack your bags, we'll leave tonight.

He put down his guitar, and I said to the fish closest to me, “This is a lake.
The water goes nowhere—just round and round.

The fish looked at the pin wheel in my shirt pocket and said, “Why don’t
you go back to where you came from.”

Then Eddie Money blew a whistle and led all the fish through the water until
I couldn’t see them anymore.

It was then I woke up from my dream.
I woke up and said to no one there,
“What does this all mean?”
And no one did not care,
To answer my dream.

And yet I smiled, and then laughed to an extreme,
For what it really means
is not the point of the matter,
just the feeling, which in this case, is levity and laughter.