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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749  
Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
October 4, 2020  
18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 55:6-9; Matthew 20:1-16

Hymns: 540; 399:1,3,5; 400; 644

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Philippians 1:18<sub>B</sub> - 27

<sup>18</sup> ... Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

<sup>19</sup> For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

<sup>20</sup> according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

<sup>21</sup> For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. <sup>22</sup> But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup> For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better.

<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you.

<sup>25</sup> And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, <sup>26</sup> that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

<sup>27</sup> Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth.  
Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God our Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: Don' worry! Be happy!

How trite! That phrase was repeated in rap or song so many times a few years back that some must have regarded it almost like a magic elixir!

The Philippian Christians were anxious and worried for the Apostle Paul who was being kept as a prisoner under house arrest in Rome. He was awaiting trial before Caesar for some rather vague charges brought against Paul by the Jews in Jerusalem, It was proposed that Paul was a unsettling force within the empire, breeding insurrection by proclaiming another King, one named Jesus who had been crucified, but who Paul asserted had risen from the dead. The Christians in Philippi as well as many others were concerned that that Paul may be condemned and then executed. They were sick with worry because of their love for the Apostle who had brought them the good news of life and salvation in Jesus Christ.

It also bothered the Philippian Christians that others who were rivals and even detractors of Paul were stealing away his position of influence in the churches.

It is so easy for us to become not only distracted, but anxious and even worried about the church and those we care about and respect. These past several months have given us plenty to worry about with a pandemic still going on and the news media also sounding so alarmed about it. And then we have all this social unrest, and on top of all that a very contentious national election! It is easy for the child of God, one who firmly believes in Jesus, to become not only stressed, but **distressed** and anxious about what is going on in the world and how it might impact the ones we love, and ultimately impact the Christian Church.

Paul's answer and the message of this epistle is not trite, but rather filled with hope. The message of our text this morning is --

## **THEME: Christ Brings Joy and Rejoicing.**

Paul reminds us that --

### **I. Life is about Christ.**

Sometimes we get so caught up in the events surrounding us in this world that we lose sight of the basic truth of God's Kingdom: Christ crucified lives and reigns over all the earth!

With the opening words of our text Paul set the proper perspective for viewing all these events both then and now.

**Philippians 1:18-20** "Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. <sup>19</sup>For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, <sup>20</sup>according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."

Paul reminds his fellow believers of how important to remember it is that **life is about Christ Jesus**. Paul is fully confident and can rejoice in the fact that in all these things, (Paul's imprisonment, rival preachers arising, Paul's impending trial) the Lord is using all these things so that Christ is preached. Even if the motivation for some of these preachers is wrong, they are still presenting the gospel to people, and in that Paul rejoices.

Paul is confident that the steadfast prayers of the Christians in Philippi, as well as within other congregations in many towns and cities across the empire, those prayers would be heard and answered by the Lord. Those prayers would end in deliverance for Paul. Paul casually reminds them that whether that deliverance be life or death, it will be deliverance for Paul. Either Paul will be delivered from being a prisoner so that he might more actively return to his work as an apostle, or he will be delivered from this present evil world to spend eternity in glory before the Lord.

This is the deliverance that awaits all of us who place our hope in Christ. Either way, Christ will be magnified. Good word right there

isn't it, "magnified!" Christ will be seen BIGGER by either Paul being set free to preach or set free from this life. All will know that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior.

Jesus is our hope and our joy. We join Paul is realizing that the Lord directs all events for the advancement of His kingdom of grace, for the proclamation of the message of the gospel. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. That message of forgiveness and grace is what life is about. Life is not about pandemics. Life is not about social justice. Life is not about elections. These things happen, but the Lord uses all things to set up opportunities for the gospel to be proclaimed, that the justice of God might be known, that peace and liberty from sin, death, and the devil might be spread to the far corners of this world. Christ will be magnified! **In this we rejoice and will rejoice!**

Since it is true that life is about Christ and the spread of the gospel then we rightly conclude that –

## **II. Each Believer's Life is Not about Self!**

How easy it would have been for Paul to make his situation about him. He was the one who was being held captive. He was the one whose life was on the line. And this wasn't a short time inconvenience. This had been going on for years, starting in Jerusalem, and then he was moved to Caesarea, and sat there for three years, and then Paul was transported to Rome, and there waited for a long time for his hearing before the emperor. The uncertainty of it all could have been maddening! How easy it would have been for Paul to make this about himself, but it wasn't about Paul. He didn't see it that way, because it wasn't that way. The next words of our text are words of Paul for all of us to cherish and know for ourselves as well.

**Philippians 1:21-26** "For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. <sup>22</sup> But if *I* live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what *I* shall choose *I* cannot tell. <sup>23</sup> For *I* am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. <sup>24</sup> Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you. <sup>25</sup> And being confident of this, *I* know that *I* shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of

faith, <sup>26</sup> that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”

Paul is focused on Christ. Life is about Christ. Paul said, “*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*” (v.21) Paul understood that death brought him into eternal life with the Lord. That is far better than anything we know in this world, far better than living in this world. That hope is found in Christ and the grace Jesus brings to us.

However, Paul saw that this life had a purpose he was yet to fulfill, and fulfill it he would as long as the Lord gave Paul strength and breath. That God-given purpose was found in Paul’s ministry of teaching and encouraging his brothers and sisters in Christ with the gospel. This is what Paul saw was truly needed, and it was his hope and his life’s work to fill that need to the very best of his ability with the strength God gave him. Paul approached the future not with uncertainty and doubt and anxiety, but with the confidence of faith. Paul was confident that he could bring growth and progress in faith and in the knowledge of the truth to his fellow Christians, and the result of that would a growth in their joy in Christ.

It is at this point that Paul applies this truth also to the Philippian Christians, and so also toward us and our lives.

**Philippians 1:27** “Only let **your** conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”

It is all too easy for us to conform to the world and the ways of the world. It is all too easy to get caught up in the world’s troubles and see it through the world’s point of view. We get caught up and agitated so that we also might become contentious in our manner toward our neighbor, and even our fellow Christian. That exhortation regarding our conduct being worthy of the gospel of Christ is so important for us to remember and remember all the time. We dare not let the anger of this world infect our spirit so that we undermine the proclamation of peace that is the gospel of Christ.

You know in other circumstances maybe I would emphasize more how easy it is for us to get caught up in career goals and the pursuit of the material wealth, and fun and recreation of the world. Maybe this time the warning is well taken that we do not allow such things to be our comfort or assurance for life. What is central to our lives as individual Christians is that our purpose for being here on this earth is that we are to be lights shining in a dark place. We are to shine with the love of God, with the grace of God in Christ Jesus. We are to be that light of hope that people of the world who don't know hope will see.

At the same time we are to be an encouragement to fellow Christians. We are to strive together for the faith of the gospel. What exactly does that mean for our daily living? The truth of the gospel is so important. We must not allow it to be compromised by social norms and values. More than that, we will strive to be like the Apostle Paul in living for the advancement of the gospel, that we might assist one another in growing in faith, and in the joy of faith that fills the heart of the child of God even at the worst of times.

Finally, don't forget the significance of the rejoicing. Yes, joy and rejoicing go together, but it seems that lately there hasn't been as much rejoicing. The gathering together around the Word in worship is where we find the fullest expression of our joy in the gospel. It is here where the Word of God's forgiveness is proclaimed for us, where we are assured of heavenly glory through the merits of Christ, that we possess life through faith in Jesus' name that our hearts are filled to the brim with joy, and together with our fellow believers we rejoice.

Finally, my friends in Christ, let us comprehend what it is we are to be doing here on this earth. As we heard in our gospel lesson, the Lord has called us to work in His vineyard, spending our time doing something meaningful for the Lord. During these bleak and dark days of pandemic, social unrest, and political contentions, God has a purpose for us. We are to be a sharp and distinct contrast to all that is seen in the world. We are to reveal Christ to the world. "For me, to live is Christ," (v.21) so that my neighbors, so that my

Christian brothers and sister might see the hope, and the light, and the joy that is ours in Christ Jesus.

**AMEN.**

“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Amen. (Romans15:13)