

## Victory of the Lamb – July 5, 2020 – Finding Joy – Philippians 1:12-18

### Joy in sharing the good news - Pastor Bill Limmer

Paul is in prison in Rome and this is what he says to the congregation in the city of Philippi:

Philippians 1:12-18 **Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.** <sup>13</sup> **As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.** <sup>14</sup> **And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.** <sup>15</sup> **It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.** <sup>16</sup> **The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.** <sup>17</sup> **The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.** <sup>18</sup> **But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice**

Part of the Declaration of Independence says that one of our rights is the pursuit of happiness. And for those of us who are Americans, we normally spend a lot of time, money, and effort pursuing material things, entertainment, hobbies, sports and yep even addictions to find happiness. Right now, we are having trouble because for the most part those things have been chained. This Fourth of July summer weekend is different than any I have ever experienced. Most of our communities did not have any weekend festivals, parades or firework displays and that has left us looking not only for happiness but for joy.

And that is one of the reasons why today we are continuing our new series **Finding Joy**.

For most of us our summer vacations are put on hold/canceled, Paul, a friend of Jesus could relate. For the longest time Paul wanted to go to Rome. For Paul, he was thinking a working vacation. Go to Rome and share the gospel of Jesus there, maybe plant a church. But things didn't quite happen the way he envisioned. He did get to go to Rome. But remember this is like 2,000 years ago and so he couldn't hop on a plane and be there in a couple of hours. He got to sail there. Only there were no cruise ships. And not only were there no cruise ships, the ship he was on became shipwrecked. He makes it to shore only to get bitten by a poisonous viper. His trip to Rome made the Griswald's European Vacation look like a highlight reel.

But it actually gets better... and worse. Paul is able to go to Rome because as a prisoner. He is a prisoner for the sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. When he finally gets to Rome, he is placed on house arrest. And so he has a 24/7 monitoring bracelet chained to him in the form of a Roman guard. So when he eats, a guard is there. When he sleeps, a guard is there. When he goes to the bathroom, a guard is there. When a friend comes by for conversation, a guard is there. Paul is chained up.

Before we continue on, here's a question for you. Do you ever feel like you are chained to someone or something? Are you chained to unfavorable circumstances, a job you don't like, a school you don't like, a difficult situation, a disease?

Look at the attitude of Paul as he references his chained-up circumstance: **Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.** <sup>13</sup> **As a**

**result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.** Paul is having a blast. You see, it is not so much that Paul is chained to a guard but that a guard is chained to Paul. And through the guards listening to Paul's prayers, to Paul's conversations with those who came to visit him, and with the guards' own conversation with Paul, the good news of Jesus is actually being shared through the whole palace guard. A regiment of at least 1,000 soldiers who served Caesar. Talk about turning lemons into lemonade.

As we go back into the book of Philippians not only is Paul sharing the gospel but <sup>14</sup> . . . **because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.** Christians began to share their faith with their families, neighbors, and co-workers as they considered the faith and the cost and the value of sharing the Gospel. A movement of sharing Jesus on the streets and in the commonness of everyday life started. When Christians share their faith, it motivates others to do the same. It still happens today whether it is some like our member Micah Torgerson traveling around the room or for others it happens over and cup of coffee on coffee shop patio deck or in the front seat of the van after a Starbucks drive through..

The movement of Christianity in Rome continued to grow even though as Paul said, **It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.** <sup>16</sup> **The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.** <sup>17</sup> **The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.** <sup>18</sup> **But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached.** These missionaries were preaching the true Christ, but their motives were all wrong. Likely they are trying to magnify the ministry they are doing by putting down Paul's ministry. Paul had it all going for him and then he dropped the ball, had a character flaw, and so instead of having a flourishing ministry he is now in prison. The more they speak, the more their own ways are justified and the more Paul is made to look foolish, insignificant, less.

Despite this, Paul still rejoices that Jesus is being preached because he knows that it is not his name that this is the important name. 1 Corinthians 1: **My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.** <sup>12</sup> **What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."** <sup>13</sup> **Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?**—Paul understood that it's not about Paul and so, since the gospel of Jesus was being preached, he rejoiced.

Do you follow the Victory pastors, or the St. John's pastors, or the St. Paul's pastors, or the Southbrook pastors or the Core pastors... or Jesus? If you were watching a movie that I was in, and the credits rolled after the movie, you would see my name at the bottom right after the words 4<sup>th</sup> bald guy. There is not a competition between Christian churches, or at least there should not be. It is not about the pastors or the church. It's about Jesus. And so Pastor Ben and I frequently rejoice in prayer over the sharing of the gospel message in our community and world through the various pastors and other Christians!

Paul says, **Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.** The question is: why does all this gospel preaching bring joy to the prisoner Paul? Paul was filled with joy when the gospel was preached because he knew what it was like to be chained to sin. There was a time when Paul thought his righteousness, his way of life, his political party, his views, his cause, made him better than others, canceled everyone out and made him righteous. But when Paul understood that he was not to compare himself to other sinful

people but to the righteous God, he realized was the chief of sinners and should have been cancelled from God's presence and blessings forever. But God cancelled his sin and shortcomings without canceling him by putting for the full punishment of cancellation on Jesus Christ, Paul knew what joy was all about. The gospel told Paul he was loved, valued and more than enough. Paul was set free. And this truth brought Paul joy and he understood it was a joy to be shared.

We lose a lot of joy today and gain a lot of anger when we get into the comparison game. And in the comparison game we get upset over the thoughts and actions of others, the Republicans, or the Democrats, the Health Department, the Black Lives Matter, the blue Lives matter, the All Lives Matter. We get upset because we don't always stand up to our own standards over ourselves because we if we don't even add up to our own standards as we often demonstrate by changing our standards. Here is the question that will help us unlock joy in our lives. But when you and I are so humbled that we believe in our heart of hearts that "I am the chief of sinners" that we realize our real need for Jesus to rescue us. It is when you and I awe are touched in our hearts with the good news of Jesus taking our place and forgiving our sins that it actually leads to awe and wonder of God's love for us. That's when we find joy. And you when you receive that joy which is yours in Christ you are you can let down your guard. You

The liberating truth of the Christian gospel is that God's love for us and approval of us has nothing to do with us. The Christian life begins with grace, continues with grace, and concludes with grace. Jesus took down your idol statues, Jesus topple your sins, but he didn't leave your place empty. He made you new. This Independence Day Weekend you are free in Christ. **The more you realize what you were set free from, the more you will realize what you were set free for.** Free from sin and free to share the good news in joy that you have in Christ and that is for all people.

Paul's salvation receipt is your **salvation receipt** too. And with the salvation receipt in your heart, you now have something of value and joy to share. Romans 1:16 **For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes.**

Remember when we were talking earlier about being chained to tough circumstances or tough relationships? Did you ever stop to think that just maybe these things are chained to you instead of the other way around? This is your opportunity to join with Jesus on his mission of seeking and saving the lost. Share the good news of Jesus with others and increase your joy and theirs. Location is the opportunity for relationship. Relationship is the opportunity for sharing the good news. Good news is the opportunity for joy not only for us but for us to share by joining Jesus on his mission.

Like Paul, you can share your joy by **Finding your One!** Who are you going to share the salvation receipt with? Who is your One? You may be wondering, am I right the person for the job. I want you to know you are. God has placed you where you need to be. He is already there. **It is not about the act of sharing the good news it is about the heart of heart of sharing the good news.** Don't share the gospel because you have to share the gospel because you love people. When you struggle to share Jesus just remember God's love for you and you will have all you need – a dependence on Jesus, a relationship with others, and the joyful message of Christ is Savior of all.