

It is good to be with you this morning.

Umm.

I have anticipated this

day for several weeks

and.

I've. You know, odd

sort of way. Kind of looked forward to

the opportunity to just sharing some some

of God's word with you this morning.

Your church has been through some fairly

rough waters. As many

of you know, I have worked closely with

your church for the last five or six

months as we've navigated these days.

And I'm honored to speak to you this

morning from God's Word. And I believe

that He has a word for us.

Out of this passage of First Philippians

1/3 through 11. So

before we get started on that, I would

just like to take a moment and pray and

ask God to bless our time.

Father.

You are the God of all days.

You made today and you brought us  
into this day and you allow us  
to walk through this day. And Father,  
I pray that as we spend time  
in your word this morning, as we  
look to your timeless. The Word Father,  
I pray that you would speak to each  
one of us. I pray God that you  
would, by your Holy Spirit, allow your  
Word to come alive, maybe active in our  
hearts and minds. Father, I pray that  
everything that I say would be exactly  
what you once said in a way that  
you would want it. Said so that all of  
us can hear from your spirit and know how  
to respond to you. Father,  
we commit this time to you. We'd  
ask that you would guide us now  
in Jesus name, Amen.

My eyes are getting old.

Umm, this is a letter. Philipians is a  
letter. I'm getting a lot of weird  
feedback. I don't know if you guys are,  
but it sounds really kind of odd. Anyway,

this is a letter that was written by  
the apostle Paul and it speaks to a  
church to remind them that. That  
joy can be found in  
any and every situation.

Regardless of the days that we find  
ourselves in, he's reminding this church  
that they can find joy in the midst  
of their days. Paul wrote this letter to  
the Philippian church while he was in  
Rome, most likely in prison.

Sometime around AD 62, there's  
a significant theme that runs  
through this letter, and it's  
the theme of joy. Joy  
stands in contrast to happiness.

Happiness is dependent upon  
circumstances, but joy is the  
confident assurance. Of God's love and  
His presence with us as we walk through  
the day that He's given us. Joy is  
one of the fruits of His Spirit that  
is resident within us. It's what He  
brings into our lives and into our days

that only He can bring in a way

that only He can bring it.

His joy Jesus promised us

that His church would experience

a full and complete joy.

He says in John 15:11, I have

told you this so that my joy may

be in you, and your joy would be

complete. He wants us

to be overflowing with joy.

Now, in John 15, Jesus knew

what lied ahead for him in

just a few hours, didn't He?

He knew where he was going. This

is part of what they call the last

discourse. And so he

was talking about this transference of

joy that he was teaching his disciples

about in the midst of the shadow of

the cross.

Now Paul models what it looks like

to practically live a life of joy,

even in the most difficult of

circumstances. In these 9 verses

that we're going to look at, there's a wealth of teaching that I do not have the time and you don't have the seat power for me to unpack.

So I'm just going to draw out three truths out of this, these 11 verses, and we're going to look at 3 particular applications. But the first truth that we're going to look at comes from verses 3 through 6. And it really is key. We're going to spend a little more time here than we will on the other two this morning. But the first truth is that joy is found when we focus on God's activity. Joy is found when we focus on God's activity, he says. In verse three, he says, I think my God, every time I remember you in all of my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it

on to completion until the day of  
Christ Jesus. From the  
very beginning of this letter, Paul is  
going before the Lord, and he's praying  
for this church that he truly loves,  
and he's remembering this church before  
God's throne. He remembers his time with  
them, and he remembers it with  
thankfulness. He recalls them and holds  
them. Not before God, with a heart  
full of joy. In  
all my prayers for all of  
you, I always pray for joy.  
With joy. Paul's memory focuses on  
God's activity and not the circumstances  
of man's activity.  
He didn't focus on the bad  
experiences, although he could have.  
This is what Paul experienced. Paul's  
experience was like in Philippi. You can  
read about this in Acts 16. Paul  
has a vision one night where a  
man from Macedonia shows up and begs  
him to come to Macedonia to help

them out. So Paul, Silas, Timothy, and  
and. Probably a few others make their  
way to Philippi, which is a Roman colony  
and a leading city in that area. There  
was not a synagogue there for him to  
go to, which was his typical strategy  
when he entered into a city which says  
that this was a thoroughly Hellenistic  
city with completely. Influenced by Greek  
and Roman culture, there was no  
sense that there was a Jewish  
monotheistic culture anywhere within this  
city. Instead, he goes to the  
river where he expects to find  
some spiritual activity because that was  
part of the culture of a  
Hellenistic society. And he begins  
to talk about Jesus at the river, where  
there's a woman named Lydia who's  
listening. And it says that the Lord  
opened her heart to respond to the  
gospel, and she opens her home for them  
to come and stay where while they're in  
that town. While they're

there, Paul and his companions encounter a slave girl who has a demon inside of her. She was possessed by this demon, and she made a lot of money for her owners, predicting the future of people now the demon recognized. Paul and his men as servants of the God Most High and here. And this demon harasses Paul for several days until Paul can't take it any longer and he cast the demon out of the girl. Well, the owner of the girl was not all that excited about that because he just lost a stream of income.

And so he realizes that his days of making money through this girl were gone.

So he drags Paul and Silas to the authorities and makes a false accusation about them. Now the magistrates order them to be publicly stripped and severely flogged publicly and then thrown into prison.

About midnight, it says Paul and Silas  
are doing what all prisoners do, right?  
They're praying and they're worshipping,  
they're singing hymns and all of  
the other prisoners are listening to  
them go through this.

And all of a sudden, what? Like  
every evening, there's this violent  
earthquake. That happens.

So violent that it that it throws  
the prison doors open, right?

Well, the jailer wakes up. I have a  
sneaking suspicion that the jailer was  
probably already awake listening to these  
guys sing and and pray and do all  
this stuff. Because in those days, the  
jailer probably lived either above or  
right next to the prison. OK,  
but regardless, the jailer calms. He sees  
that the prison doors are open, and as  
a good jailer, he makes ready to fall  
on his sword because he knows that if  
the prisoners had escaped that night, he  
knew what lie ahead for him the next

morning. Paul cries out.

Don't do that. We're all here.

The jailer was amazed. He

drinks with them, he takes him

into his home. He washes their wounds

and the jailer's family. He the jailer

asked what must I do to be

saved? And so Paul

says, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ

and be baptized. And so that night the

jailer and his family are all baptized.

Jailer brings him into his home. He feeds

them. His whole family is joyful because

they had just begun to believe in God.

Well. The next morning,

the magistrates, they decide they need to

get rid of these guys. And so they

say release those guys, let them go and

get them out of town. And Paul, being

the sharp sort of guy that he is,

he says wait, wait, wait. That's not the

way this is going to roll.

I and Silas are actually Roman citizens,

and you can't treat us the way you

treated us. And so

that upsets the magistrate. Magistrate

calms, and he's trying to appease Paul

and Silas and make things right and

escorts them out of prison, is gonna

escort them out of the city. But before

they go, they stop by Lydia's house.

Not just to say goodbye, but he wants

to encourage the brothers, the new

believers. Who have come to faith. He

wants to encourage them before they

leave. So why did I tell you this long

story? To say that

Paul had every reason to remember

the bad experiences that he had

in Philippi, didn't he?

Now, I don't know about you, but if if I

got dragged down to downtown or Kansas

City in the middle of the street, had

somebody accused me of something that I

didn't do, they stripped me naked and

beat me to a pulp, that would constitute

a bad day. Not

to mention that they throw me in jail.

I might remember that it might leave a  
mark. I might  
become victimized.

I might become.

Stressed.

What did Paul do? Paul did

something entirely different.

Instead, he chose to remember

the things that God did,

and God's activity overshadowed all

the negative things that man

did. He

chose what he was going to

remember. We can

choose what we set our minds on as

well. Our minds don't

have to run free, and in our

human flesh driven selves it can be

easy, especially when we've been hurt,

taking advantage of or discouraged to

focus on the negative.

But Paul says in Second Corinthians

10/5 that we take captive every

thought. And make it obedient

and to Christ Jesus. We can

control what we set our minds on.

Paul gives the Philippians a way to do

that, a very practical way to do that.

A little later in this letter that he's

writing in Philippians 4 verses 8 and 9,

he says this finally, brothers and

sisters. Whatever is true.

Whatever is noble, whatever

is right, whatever is

pure, whatever is lovely.

Whatever is admirable.

If anything is excellent or

praiseworthy. Think about such

things. Whatever you have

learned or received or heard from me

or seen in me.

Put it into practice.

And the God of.

Peace. Will be with you.

It is precisely because Paul focused

on God's activity that he was

able to tell them.

Because of your partnership in the

gospel from the first day until  
now, being confident of this, that  
he who began a good work  
in you will carry it on  
until completion, until the day of  
Christ Jesus.

There was a reason he could say that.  
Those weren't just nice words that you  
find on the Hallmark card.

Those were words of truth.

That were based on a foundation.

Of joy and the  
presence, the activity of  
God Himself.

Paul saw how God used the people  
of the Philippian church to participate  
in the advancement of the gospel and  
their faithfulness to it from the first  
day until now. He could say with  
confidence that the work that God had  
started in them, it was God's work.

That he started in them and he was going  
to bring it to completion. Not a single  
one of them.

But God himself would bring it

to completion.

Because of who he is and what he's doing

and how he does it.

It didn't mean that the Philippian church

would last until Jesus's return.

We know that's not the truth. So what was

he talking about there? You're

talking about the gospel work that they

were engaging in, in the lives of others

that would go from one person to the next

person and to the next person. And we'll

continue on even into today.

As we're talking about this church

and this matter right now.

If God could continue the work of

the Philippian Church for 2000 years.

I think we have a high level of

confidence that he can continue the work

of Knoll Ave. Baptist. Until the day

of Christ Jesus.

We don't always know exactly what God's

work is or how he will be faithful

to complete it. But

as we respond to Him in  
faith, we can see His work  
continue to grow and advance in  
us and through us for the  
glory of God.

Now I've started 2 churches and I've  
played key roles in starting a number of  
others.

The church that we started in  
Vancouver, we saw many people come  
through our ministry. We had about  
a 30% turnover every year.

When you have that kind of a turnover  
every year, you have to believe in church  
growth because you have to grow by 30%  
just to stay even.

But we saw a lot of people coming  
and going. Now the church never really  
grew all that big. We  
might get we've bounced between 80 to 90  
to maybe 100. We did that for 13  
years. But we baptized,  
I've lost count. I've baptized a lot of  
people. And we saw hundreds of people

coming and going through this church. And you know what? We realized that we could never strategize the work that we were doing now if we had went there to start a church that was going to look like some spiritual organization. That grew and just did spiritual things that we call a church today. We I would have been very disappointed.

Because it wasn't what I was hoping to see when we started, but I grew to realize that God was doing a work that was far bigger than the walls of any church that I started. Because the church that we started in Vancouver has had worldwide impact. We have seen people all around the world.

Who are making a difference for the cause of Christ because of their time at the bridge? A little church in Vancouver, BC.

We don't always know exactly what the future looks like.

We don't always know what our church is supposed to be this time next year or

five years from now, but if one thing I  
can assure you is that because of where  
you have been and all is not going to  
look like what you have been.

You will be different.

Because of what you've walked through.

You will be a different people.

Because of how you experience Christ  
through this. And

it will be a good work that God will  
bring to completion until the day of  
Christ Jesus.

The next truth that we're going to  
consider? Comes from verses 7

and 8. It says

it is right for me to feel this

way about you since I have you in

my heart. Whether I am in chains or

defending and confirming the gospel, all

of you share in God's grace with me.

God can testify how I long for all

of you with the affections of Christ

Jesus. This truth

is, is it God's grace?

Fuels our relationships.

God's grace. Fuels our

relationships. Our love for one another

is not based upon circumstances.

Anybody who's been married for more than

six months knows that.

Our love is not based upon circumstances.

Paul says that whether he's in chains.

Or doing the work of the ministry,

sharing the gospel wherever he's going.

This church was always in his heart,

and they share in God's rich grace

as a result. We

can always look for the best in one

another. We can always love others

because of God's grace that is in us

and is for us. We have experienced

personally God's grace, haven't we?

We know what he's done in

our lives. We know

the sin that He is forgiven.

We know the changes that He

has wrought in us individually. We

know what His grace is. We

know that we don't deserve to  
stand in His presence except by  
the grace of God.

We know I couldn't work it out, I  
couldn't earn it, I couldn't buy it.

It was a gift. Of grace  
that has been extended to us.

You stand with God when you  
share in His grace.

It is God's grace that enables us to  
experience all of who He is.

And all of what He does, His  
grace brings us into a loving  
relationship with Him, and it empowers

our hearts and our minds to live  
like Christ would. And

to respond to life's circumstances  
as Christ would.

Whatever that circumstance is.

His grace empowers us to make  
the right choices, to do the

right things in the right ways

at the right times. God's grace

makes that possible when our flesh

would rather do any number of  
other things.

God's grace changes us.

Changes our minds. Changes our  
attitudes. Changes our thoughts. Changes  
our actions. God's grace enables  
us to live and respond  
to life like Christ would.

None of us have it together.

No one is as mature in Christ as  
we might like to think we are, or  
at least might like to think others think  
we are.

None of us have it together. We are all  
in desperate need of God's grace.

When someone offends us.

We can respond as the world might  
respond, or we can focus on the  
goodness of God's grace. We can focus  
on what is true, or what is  
noble, or what is right, or what  
is pure, or what is lovely, or  
what is admirable or excellent. The  
Praiseworthy. God's

grace enables us.

To think about that.

If I were in a situation and

I would ask, what would the noble

thing be here?

What would the lovely response

be?

What would the most

excellent response or activity

be?And

I begin to let God change

me. Change the way

I'd live. Change the things I do.

We can share in God's grace with

one another, and we can experience our

hearts beginning to grow in love with

them and for them.

This leads us to the third truth that

we're going to look at in this passage,

and that is your love for one another

will help you know and understand God

better. Your love

for one another will help you

know and understand God better, he

says. And this is my  
prayer. That your  
love may abound more and more in  
knowledge and depth of insight so that  
you may be able to discern what  
is best. And pure and  
blameless for the day of Christ, Filled  
with the fruit of righteousness that  
comes through Jesus Christ to the glory  
and praise of God.

You see, the more you know and  
understand God and His love for you,  
the more you are able to grow  
and love for one another. And where  
love abounds in increasing measure, you  
will be able to know and understand  
God in abounding and greater ways as  
well. Because you will see Him  
and His word playing out practically  
through your lives for the lives of  
one another. That's what it  
looks like to love.

Others. We have  
a spiritual responsibility. To

always be on the lookout for what is  
best, what is pure, what is blameless,  
and to help one another experience that.

The best way you can love someone  
else is to help them see and  
experience God's true.

And the one who loves them  
best and most is him.

When you love someone, it can  
be emotionally assuring, but when that  
person knows that God loves them  
deeply because you have demonstrated that  
to them, you will actually speak  
into their soul.

You can never love someone better than  
God can, but you can love them the best  
when they see Him through you.

When someone is hurting around you,  
an encouraging word from you might  
be soothing, but when they experience  
the encouragement from God and His  
Word delivered through your words and  
actions, it can actually be healing.

God can use you to

bring healing. By allowing

His spirit and His Word.

To demonstrate, to communicate, to

be active action activated through

your life.

Then you will see God at work in ways

that you never expected to see Him at

work. And you know what? You will grow to

know Him better. And better.

Because you've experienced him and

they've experienced him through you.

You do that when you are praying for

your brothers and sisters and and you're

listening to God on their behalf.

Letting your love for them grow and

abound, looking for God's activity and

their best. What would

Jesus do or say that would help them

experience Him and His love and His

goodness, His presence in their life when

we begin to to pray and ask God, use

me so that they might see you through me

and experience your love in their souls.

They know that they've just encountered

God.

I was with the pastor this last week, a pastor who I'm coaching in a particular area of ministry. He is a great leader and he's doing a great job with his church, but he was wanting some particular help in in a in a certain area where he felt like he was struggling. And so we've been meeting for several. Months about this and I love this man. I pray for him regularly. I think about him often, I think about how I can help him and be a part of what God is doing in his life and and we were together and as we were together this last week, I just sensed God's prompting me to ask him some particular. Questions. So I asked him these questions and and then there were some specific verses that came to my mind that spoke to our conversation. And at the end of our time together, he looked at me and he said. This was gold. For

me. And it reminded

me of Proverbs 25:11 when it says a

word spoken at the right time is like

apples of gold in settings of silver.

Do you know what it's like when God

uses you to speak into someone's life

like that?

There's the most encouraging, thrilling

part of your day.

Because you know, you just experienced

God and they know they just experienced

God and God met a need that

they had.

Well, that can happen among you.

I know because I was here when you took

a vote to bring Seth to be your pastor.

I know it was a unanimous vote.

It was a it was a great

day. Now some of you have asked

me how did this happen? Did we

make a mistake? And I would encourage

you that the last two years was

not a mistake.

God never left you.

Nor did he forsake you.

And God never makes mistakes.

There are times we go through

difficulties. We

go through the Valley of shadows.

And his rod and his staff are

there to guide us.

It didn't mean that we just wandered into

that valley of shadows. What does it say?

He leads us through them.

He allows you and I to go through

difficulties.

Purposefully. Not

to harm you.

Not because you did something wrong or

bad. So

that you might know him better.

In ways that you would never have

experienced him had you not taken that

journey.

Paul went through his great difficulty in

Philippi, wouldn't you say?

But he says in the same letter

in Philippians 38, I consider everything

a loss because of the surpassing worth  
of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for  
whose sake I have lost everything.

I wanna end with three applications.

The first one is. Focus  
on God's activity, not the circumstances  
that you've walked through.

Some here have experienced great  
discouragement and pain.

Some have experienced  
significant confusion and  
disappointment. But I  
encourage you to focus on what God  
is doing in your midst. He is  
here and He is active.

Lives have been changed in the  
last couple of years. Celebrate that  
God's Spirit has protected you and  
LED you through this season. Focus  
your hearts on Him.

I'm not saying to just forget it  
and get over. No, Paul didn't forget  
what had happened to him.

He wrote it all down so we could read it.

He didn't focus on it. He didn't allow it to control his thoughts, his attitudes, his emotions, his actions. Instead, he focused on the activity of God and let it fuel his understanding and awareness of God's incredible activity.

What God does is always best.

Paul remembered the lives that were changed. He remembers Lydia's life was changed. He remembers that the jailer and his family's lives were changed and many others in Philippi, so much so that they were generous with Paul, financially supported him to continue. His work when he went to Thessalonica. But even more, Paul recognized before God's throne their partnership in advancing the gospel throughout all of Macedonia.

Let the strength of God's Spirit strengthen you and your hearts and your minds to restore joy where you are, where you're focusing on God's activity.

Practically, maybe you want to

memorize Philippians 4:8 and 9.

Focus on each of those words, and

what would it look like if you

set your minds on these qualities and

allow your words and activities and

attitudes to be shaped by the things

that are true, noble, pure, lovely,

admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy?

A little hint that I did when I was

working on that verse, I had this just

one of these sticky pieces of paper, you

know, sticky note things, and I just put

T&RPLA on it, T&RPLA and I stuck it on

the wall by my door and my office door

when I like worked and had a.

A real job, but.

And people would come, they say, what is

this, T&RPLA? And I would say that's

those are the things that I'm setting my

mind on. Those are the things I focus on

when I walk outside the store.

But there are practical ways that will

allow you to let God shape your mind.

The second application is let God's grace

fuel and empower your relationships.

God's grace enables you to experience

God's presence and His goodness in your

life. You can do that because God's Word

reminds you of His. Grace. Your soul

cries out for His grace when you sinned

or have been spiritually disconnected,

and you can help others experience God's

grace by helping them see and experience

His grace instead of focusing on the

circumstances that have led to their hurt

or pain.

Maybe you're not all that aware that

there are those in your church who are

hurting. Or how they've been

hurt. Paul says that

these people were in his heart and he

longed for them with the affection of

Jesus. Let God's grace help

you see and care for each other and

find your love for one another beginning

to grow. You'll

be a much stronger and healthier church

because of this experience. God has

brought each of you to this church

purposefully. It is not by accident that

any one of you are here.

So there's a reason, and it is so

that you would be knit into this body

of believers. So

that you care and love one another

and demonstrate the presence of Christ.

Through your body.

You're sitting in a community

that desperately needs to see

Jesus alive. And active.

Not just the philosophy, not just

an idea, not just the subject

of many books.

But as someone who is

actually alive. And

they should look no further than All

Ave. Baptist Church to see Jesus alive

and active.

Third, one is let encourage one another

to experience the love of Christ.

Encourage one another, help one another

see the goodness of God and His activity.

Help each other to see the truth of

His presence in your midst.

Help each other to focus on the

good that you are all filled with

His righteousness. Be

on the lookout for what is best

and pure and blameless and make much

of it.

And as you do,

you will experience him

in ways you never

dreamed possible.

You may think you know God.

You may think because you've walked with

Jesus for 4050, sixty, 70 years, I

don't know that you know God.

Let me assure you. You

know, only a minuscule amount of him.

There is way more of him to know.

And you're gonna know that as you love

one another, as you care for one another,

and you see him at work in you and

through you, and as others love him. And

they minister to you, and you actually

let them minister to you.

That you began to see

Christ.

I love your church. I

desperately love your church.

Because I see the potential of what God

can do through your church.

And so I'm grateful for the opportunity

to walk alongside of you.

I will do that anyway I can. I'm

excited for you to have Steve come.

Didn't plan to tell you this, but I

honestly, truly, sincerely believe he is

the best inner pastor you could ever hope

to get. You are.

He'll be good for you.