

1/28/24

Good Morning, Cornerstone! It is good to be with you this morning. If this is your first time worshipping with us, I want to invite you to fill out our connection card. It just lets us get to know you a little more and be able to connect with you more. If Cornerstone is home for you, you can use our app to check in and let us know you are here. There you can also fill out a prayer request so we can be praying for you throughout the week.

We are starting our new sermon series called “Counterfeit”. Where we are going to be looking at the things that claim to bring us joy but in the end are counterfeit. These are the things that we pursue instead of Christ in the hopes that they bring us joy and peace.

Today our scripture is going to be found in Philippians 4:4-13. If you have your bibles go ahead and turn there, if you would like to follow along with us. If you do not have a paper bible and would like one, we have some available for you in the back. You can also follow along with us today on the app with the scripture and our sermon notes available to you there.

But before we dive in the teaching today, lets read a part of our passage this morning together which comes from the book of Philippians 4:11-13. So let us stand as you are able, out of reverence for God’s word as we proclaim the truth in scripture.

[1] SCRIPTURE Philippians 4:11-13

“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

INTRO

[2] A counterfeit is something that is intentionally created to look authentic, but its purpose is to deceive. In terms of the Christian life, oftentimes we—willingly or unwillingly—fall for a counterfeit Lifestyle. It could be the American dream of simple greed. The counterfeits are things we think will satisfy our deepest desires, but it cannot. In the end, only God can do that.

[3] Today I want to talk about this idea of counterfeit Joy. Which is why we are in the letter of Philippians this morning. It is often referred to as the ‘letter of joy’. In this short 4 chapter letter the word ‘joy’ appears 5 times and the word ‘rejoice’ appears 7 times, 2 of which are in our section this morning. It’s funny that this letter is often referenced that way because if we look into the context of this letter, it does not appear there is much joy, or rejoicing to be had.

This church in Philippi that this letter is addressed to, was under some severe persecution. Philippi was a city located in the northern part of Greece and was a substantial Roman settlement. In fact, it is known for when roman soldiers retired they would use their money and purchase land and live out the rest of their days in the city of Philippi.

As we have mentioned before the Christian were not too popular among the Roman citizen let alone the Roman soldiers. You can image the kind of persecution that they would have received. Especially since

many of the people in this church were probably converted Roman soldiers and would have been seen as traitors.

Paul who is writing this letter to the church is also imprisoned for his faith. He would have been held in harsh conditions probably his first imprisonment in Rome which would not have been a pleasant one. So where is all this joy coming from in this 'letter of joy'.

Paul when he is talking to this church, he knows that they need a sense of joy and peace, as well as he knows that he is in need of it too. So even though he is writing to them, he is also writing in reminder to himself.

He is reminding the church that peace and the joy that is in God, is needed in hard circumstances. We need to be filled with true joy when we are faced with circumstances that attempt to rob us of it. Which is why in those times of desperation we will often fall for the counterfeits.

BODY

A few weeks ago, when we were talking about the spiritual habit of prayer, we discussed this verse about be the recipe for joy in our prayer life. Which is still true but I knew that I was going to be talking about this passage again and the verses after it, so I only gave you half the recipe. The verse we looked at was...

[4] Philippians 4:4-7

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness^[d] be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; ⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

This passage is addressing 2 things that often go hand in hand and are the opposite of each other when Christian's face hardship, Prayer and anxiety. When we feel out of control or we worry about our provisions or our future it produces anxiety. Our heartbeat will increase, our blood pressure rises, all of our thoughts begin to race, and all we can think of are worst case scenarios. Some of you your anxiety is going up just because I am talking about all of this.

But everyone, take a deep breath, and let see what Paul has to say about his relationship between prayer and anxiety.

[5] Philippians 4:4

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."

Paul's first instruction in hardship is to rejoice. In fact, Paul believes this step to be so important he repeats it to emphasize its importance. Something that is common in eastern literature. And yes, it is as simple as it sounds. Hey your in a period of hardship, hey celebrate, rejoice, just be happy.

Paul's instruction is that simple. Face hardship, rejoice. This is not just a rejoicing just because. Its not him telling the church get over it and celebrate that your suffering. Yey! Suffering for Jesus!

This idea of rejoicing in the midst of hardship is a common thing in Paul's letters. We see it in Col. 1:24, 2:5; 1 Thes. 1:6; 2 Cor. 8:2. In every instance of it there is a reason for the rejoicing. It is not a celebrate

just because, but it is always an emphasis on celebration because there is never a situation that we will ever face that is beyond the Lord's intervention. Which is why he says...

[6] Philippians 4:5

"Let your reasonableness^[d] be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand"

Reasonableness/gentleness is a characteristic of showing consideration for one another. This reasonableness being revealed to believer and non-believers would have been used to show the power of the gospel to transform and reconcile. This is an element of selflessness. A gentle or reasonable person does not insist on his rights¹.

Fairness and humanitarianism were to be developed so that they were visible to all. They were to characterize the church. The church's ability to rejoice in the midst of suffering is an opportunity to testify to the power of the gospel in our own lives. So even though you're facing hardship, how you handle the hardship preaches the gospel to those who are witnesses.

Paul creates this assertive charge, or a deep conviction for action, because Paul says, the Lord is at hand. The Lord is at hand is Paul saying Day of Christ, the final day or judgement day is close. This would have been motivation to live in a godly manner². The early church lived with a sense of urgency about this day of the Lord coming soon, because they believed the Lord was coming in their lifetime³.

We can look back at them then and think man they had plenty of time. However, they didn't know when he was coming but they were prepared in case he did. We as the modern church would do well to live with that same urgency, always being prepared as if he is coming tomorrow because we don't know.

This emphatic charge would have been sobering to these Christians. For the believer that was not displaying this characteristic they would have known that Jesus was coming as judge. They knew that Jesus was expecting to see this quality in the ones that claim to be HIS people. It also would have been sobering to those that had been working to maintain this characteristic because this was a characteristic that Jesus embodied. They would have found comfort knowing that he knows what it is like to develop it in the face of persecution.

But even in this emphatic charge and this looming reminder that Jesus is coming soon to judge the living and the dead, Paul reminds them...

[7] Philippians 4:6

"do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

When we talked about this when we were studying prayer this is not Paul telling the church that they can never feel anxious. This is not him saying, 'oh you feel anxious, well stop it'. What Paul is talking about is when the anxious thought comes, make them known to God through prayer. **Prayer is the process that cures anxiety.** This is not like medicine, you don't just take it once and the symptoms go away. Paul is saying the cure for the anxious thoughts is for us not to carry them but to give them to God.

¹ 2 Cor 10:1

² Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16

³ Matt 24:36-44; 2 Peter 3:1-13

Jesus spoke about anxiety in his Sermon on the Mount. Jesus gave the same instructions do not be anxious about your life. He even gives the most common causes for anxiety.

[8] Matt 6:25

“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”

Many of the things that Jesus mentions are still the things that stimulate anxiety in us. What we look like or our physical attributes (v.27), our clothing (v.28), what we will eat or drink (v.31), and what the future may hold (v. 34). But in all of these things that stimulate anxiety Jesus compares our existence to other things in creation establishing that God sees our needs just like he fills the needs of the bird and the flowers. But Jesus instructs them in their deliverance from anxiety to seek the kingdom of God first and above all else.

[9] Matthew 6:31-34

“Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”

Jesus’ instructions are similar to Paul’s in that it’s not about never having this feeling, but addressing that when you do we seek after God or we give them over to him. Paul’s instruction create the picture of prayer that we talked about a couple weeks ago in this connection to God. Paul uses three words to describe prayer. His explanation points out the comprehensive nature of the prayer life. All pointing to that prayer is what relieves the problem of anxiety.

[10] Prayer (προσευχή) (proseuche) – denotes the petitioner’s attitude of mind as worshipful.

Petition/Supplication (δέησις) (deesis) – prayers as expressions of need

Requests (αἴτημα) (aitema) – things asked for

The results of this kind of prayer that is cure to anxiety. That prayer life results in the peace of God.

[11] Philippians 4:7

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

This peace can be well-being, freedom, safety and provision. Peace is the results of this life of prayer. The cure to anxiety is the peace of God. This is not the peace love and happiest most people wanted in the 70s. This is not even our human understanding of what peace is. This peace that Paul is referring to is divine peace. This peace is a result of connection in prayer and not a result of a change in circumstances.

Paul is not telling them that you will all feel better when God kills everyone that is persecuting you. He is not saying that I will be at peace when God takes me out of this prison. This peace and this joy is a characteristic of God that invades the life of the Christian believer.

This peace transcends understanding. This word transcends it means to excel or go beyond. This peace of God excels over knowledge. In situations where knowledge is insufficient, when things cannot be explained or in your situation an explanation does not help. Peace is *always appropriate* and always meets the needs of the heart.

This peace is what believers are promised to receive when they face hardship. Because knowledge or the answer to your question of why might not be helpful or the explanation won't make you feel any better. However, the peace in your heart is always appropriate and it always is constant because it comes from God and it excels and goes beyond any knowledge you could possess.

Paul also says that this peace will guard your heart. Peace is pictured as a soldier who protects the hearts and minds of believers. This peace that is a characteristic of God implanted to the believer guards and protects their hearts from the things that inspire anxiety, fear, and doubt. Even then over time the span from the anxiety to the letting go as we grow and mature gets shorter and shorter.

This peace comes from God and it is in Christ Jesus that this peace will guard your heart. There needs to be a dependence on God not on their knowledge, understanding, or circumstances. Peace comes through prayer when face with hard circumstances. Peace does not come from the change in circumstances. Peace comes from Christ, who is unchanging. He provides peace in the midst of difficult situations.

Most of that you all heard 2 weeks ago when we talked about prayer. This recipe for peace. Here's the rest of what Paul was talking about. Prayer is the introduction. It is the start of the process peace is given through the giving up of the things that make us anxious. This peace though isn't meant to be a tank that gets filled and drained by our anxious thoughts. We do not seldomly return to pray to receive our ration of peace.

Peace is something to be maintained and should be a constant characteristic of God displayed in the believer. This peace as Paul is about to describe in this passage is maintained through thought and through action.

[12] Philippians 4:8

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

These things create the environment of peace by unified thought. The church was to make these matters its collective goal, and God would rule in them. Individual Christians were to also conduct their lives in this way. This speaks to the need of rearranging life and thought through discipline so that the God of peace can freely work.

"think about these things..." (logizethe v.8) – more than just concerning simple thought. The church was to count on these things and to chart its course according to them. These characteristics would unite the church and present a good testimony to the world. Peaceful in thought, so God can work internally.

[13] Philippians 4:9

"What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you."

“Practice these things...” (prassete) meaning put them into practice. Paul urges them to use himself as an example for effective Christian living. Paul is saying if this model, his life, is imitated and repeated, the God of peace will be with them just as He has been with Paul.

Paul has turned his life upside down in every sense of the phrase in order to follow the will of God. This is the example that Paul has set. He is instructing them that God’s peace especially resides in those who have ordered their lives in accordance with God’s will. Having properly disciplined thoughts and disciplined practice.

By using ‘logizethe’ and ‘prassete’, Paul combines the mental and ethical concerns of his Jewish background with Christian thought. For Paul knowledge always led to responsible Christian living. The 2 sets of instructions on peace complement each other.

[14] When anxiety appears, the cure is prayer. When life is disorderly, the cure is mental and practical discipline.

Paul lays out this format, but by all accounts all Paul has equipped them with is knowledge which he has previously claimed is overshadowed by the peace of God. Just as Paul uses his life as an example of disciplined thinking and good Christian living, he testifies to this way of life through his own personal testimony of the effect that this peace has had on his life.

[15] Philippians 4:10

“I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity.”

This would have been Paul talking about the financial support that this church had been giving to him. Where he is showing his appreciation and understanding for whatever situation delayed their gift and support. He is about to use this as an example for the how the peace of God helped and sustained him since he had been waiting on their financial support.

[16] Philippians 4:11

“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.”

As stated before he is not expressing that he is in need. Their gift did not bring him joy, or security. Paul finds those things in Christ. Because of this through his circumstances he has learned that no matter what situation he is in he will be content.

Paul identifies that no matter what situation or circumstance that he finds himself in he is content. By definition to be content means for someone to be strong enough or possessing enough to need no aid or support. They are independent of external circumstances. They are satisfied with what they have, or with their abilities, whatever the situation. Paul would talk about this contentment often in his other letters too.

[17] 1 Timothy 6:6-8

“But godliness with contentment is great gain, ⁷ for we brought nothing into the world, and^[e] we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸ But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.”

We often find comfort in the verse that God will never leave you or forsake you right? The author of Hebrews tells us that because that is said from God to his people that it is motivation for us to find contentment even when our circumstances are not ideal.

[18] Hebrews 13:5-6

“Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”⁶ So we can confidently say,

*‘The Lord is my helper;
I will not fear;
what can man do to me?’”*

This contentment is Paul pointing out that he is able to be independent of his external circumstances because he already possesses enough to need no aid or support. He has the peace that excels the knowledge of why he is in these circumstances. He is able to be content or satisfied, independent of his external circumstances because the Peace and the Joy that he feels in these terrible circumstances is from God who is outside of his situation.

Paul when he talks about this contentment he talked about how this is something that has been developed in his life. It is something that he has had to learn over time. Paul uses this word *Manthano*. Which conveys this secret knowledge that Paul has uncovered that he is now giving to the church. Like he is letting them in on this secret knowledge that he has been graced and he wants this church to know.

[19] Contentment is learned through experience.

This contentment Paul has learned and he gives this general description of all the circumstances that he has been through.

[20] Philippians 4:12

“I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.”

This contentment has given Paul the ability to adapt to whatever he is faced with. He has face the highest of highs and the lowest of lows. He has lived in poverty and riches, victory and defeat, but he is unaffected.

Paul is pointing out this spiritual equilibrium. In all of these situations and circumstances he remains unaffected. This equilibrium is developed through the experience of walking with Christ who is the sufficient one and developed by a solid understanding of material things. That proper understanding is that things, ultimately do not matter. Paul could rise above any set of circumstances because of Christ.

[21] Philippians 4:13

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

The ‘all things’ that Paul is referring to is a provision of Christ strength to give him the power to endure any circumstance in life, because Christ empowers him to do so.

Whenever someone quotes this verse, I cringe. Because I know what they are trying to say and this verse is not saying what they think it is. Many will use this verse and abuse it by taking it out of context. They

will use it like a blanket statement of the kind of power that the Christian possesses because Christ is within them.

[22] Like Tim Tebow wearing this verse under his eye black for a football game. If this verse meant what Tim Tebow thought it meant his NFL career would have lasted longer than 3 seasons with him riding the bench for most of those seasons.

It is not a verse that gives the Christian permission to call upon the power of God to achieve whatever they desire, even if the thing they desire is outside of God's will. That is not what this verse means. The passage is talking about the material and physical needs in the day to day economic fluctuations. Paul is demonstrating that he knows a stability that allows him to rise above it.

Paul also is expressing that this power that gives him strength depends on God. It is a conditional power, wherever God leads Paul he will have the power to overcome. The will of God limited the application of the strength he knew. We cannot use this verse to cover our actions saying that God gives us the power to do whatever we set our minds to. Many who attempt to do this are doing it because they are stepping out of the will of God for their lives.

Now there is power in the name of Jesus. The apostles were to perform miracles in his name, drive out demons in his name, and lead others to a saving knowledge of Jesus all in his name. The Holy Spirit possesses power. The same spirit that raised Jesus from the dead is now alive and active within all believers⁴. As believers we are a temple of the Holy Spirit⁵.

But the Peace that Paul is talking about, this spiritual equilibrium the thing that he is able to do and maintain only happens because of Christ and only when he is dependent on Christ. That is what this verse is talking about.

[23] True Joy is only found in God Alone.

When we find that Joy that peace it is not dependent on our circumstances or our situation that we find ourselves in. It cannot be stolen by hardship or persecution, financial turmoil, hunger, poverty or starvation.

It is stability found in Christ. An equilibrium that is found and maintained when we walk with Christ and face the highs and the lows depending on God at every step then we will know that we can do all the things that God is calling us to do no matter what oppression we face or hardship that comes our way because we are walking with him and he is leading us where we need to go.

When we fall into hard times we desperately are reaching out for some sort of life line. A single moment or opportunity to have hope when we feel like we are drowning. There are so many things that appear to give us that peace of that Joy in our time of hardship. Which is why get rich quick schemes work so well. Hey your struggling financially just follow these quick and easy steps and you can make \$10,000 in 2 weeks.

⁴ Rom 6:10-11

⁵ 2 Cor. 6:16-18

Anything that offers joy or peace outside of Christ and the transformation that happens to us because of the gospel, is all counterfeit. It is only giving false hope. It is only pretending to be the real thing. By the time we realize it is a counterfeit, we are often worse off than we were before. Or like I said in the beginning we pursue all of the counterfeits first and when all of them fail then we come to God.

Here's the thing about counterfeits, once you experience the real thing. When we know it and thrive in it. We can never go back and we will never fall for the fakes. When we experience that peace and that joy in every circumstance, when we find that contentment in Christ, depend on him for that equilibrium we will deeply understand there is and never will be anything that can come close to giving us what God does.

APPLICATION

This understanding of the real peace and Joy in comparison to the counterfeit is important. And the truth is applied in more situations than just when we face hardship. The U.S. mint when they are training federal agents to spot counterfeit currency they apply the same truth.

[24] The U.S. Mint when they are training their federal agents to spot counterfeit currency. Some people may think that they show them so many examples of what a fake looks like. If you think that you would be wrong. When they train their agents they have them engage in so much time studying only the genuine currency.

You see when they know the real thing so intimately. How it feels the woven paper it printed on that is never reproduced ever except for the printing of the American dollar. When they know the ink and the different shading in the images and the inscriptions. When you know it that well, it doesn't matter what the variation is that the counterfeit has they will know it is not the real thing.

This is the same way we are to treat this idea of joy. We should be spending all of our time focused on the real things so when the counterfeit comes along we can spot it right away and acknowledge it for what it is, but we don't do we? We first chase every opportunity or to find the dead end of disappointment and brokenness. When we have exhausted all other options then we turn to Jesus.

[25] But if we follow the things that Paul outlines here, through prayer we have the cure for anxiety. The peace of God that is his character implanted on the believer. It is a divine peace that excels beyond knowledge. It is maintained through disciplined thought and through practice of disciplined actions. By maintaining this peace for God to work in we will never be rattled by our circumstances.

[26] There is nothing in this world that can deliver a peace and a joy like that. They can attempt to claim it, but it just another counterfeit. When we experience this true peace and Joy that comes through our dependence on Christ, to give us the power to do all things, in the remaining independent of our external circumstances. We will never fall for another counterfeit again because we know the one source that is real. We know it so deeply and intimately, that no matter what variation of counterfeits come our way, we can know it's not the real thing.

True Joy is Found in God Alone

PRAYER AND REFLECTION

COMMUNION