



Sunday, October 2, 2022

Speaker: Pastor John VanderWindt

Scripture: Philippians 4:4-20

Sermon: Trusting God in ALL Things

Good morning. It is good to be here. Today is a special day. First of all, it's a special day because every day is a special day to the Lord. But today is an anniversary day. Does anybody know what it's an anniversary of? [Congregation member speaks out.] It's somewhat mine. It is kind of ironic but today 39 years ago, I asked Renée on our first date, but that's a different thing. That's not the anniversary I was looking for.

What's the other one? [Congregation member speaks out.] One year ago today, I was installed as a minister here at Living Hope. [Congregation claps.] Today to celebrate, and on behalf of Renee and myself, we want to say thank you. Thank you for the support and for allowing us to be part of the family, and for allowing us to walk with you in this journey, and seeing what God is doing here among the people of Living Hope. It's a great honor and a great privilege. Thank you for that.

Today we are continuing with our look at Philippians. We will be looking at Philippians 4 this week. We've taken four weeks to go through Philippians. To do Philippians justice, we should probably take 10 weeks or more. But we're going through it and we're picking out some highlights and some pieces to it. Hopefully today, there will be some pieces in Philippians 4 which will also speak to you. So Philippians 4:1-20. It says...

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! 2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 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. 9 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.

10 I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.

13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength. 14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need.

17 Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Let's pray. Dear Lord, we come to You this morning. Lord, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You, Lord, that You invite us into seeing Your presence and that You are here with us. Lord, we thank You that You speak to us and that You long to hear from us. Lord, now as we listen to Your Word, we pray that our eyes and our ears and our hearts may be opened, that we may hear from You. Lord, we pray that Your voice may be heard. Lord, I pray that the words I speak may be of Your words and nothing of mine may come out. For Lord, this is Your house and You are Lord of all. In Jesus' name, Amen.

As I said before, we could spend much more time on the book of Philippians. There is so much in this chapter alone. Today I'm going to touch on a few things. Hopefully within those things, it will draw within you a longing to dig deeper for yourself into the Word of God, and to seek out what God is trying to tell us in this passage.

At the end of Ingrid's prayer, she read the verse from Hebrews which talked about standing firm. You'll notice in verse one, where it says, "Stand firm in the Lord in this way." In which way? In the way in which Paul has been addressing the first three chapters of Philippians. In the way of changing your mindset to be the mindset of Christ, in the way of following people who are following God, and doing what you can to live your life for God.

Then Paul says in just a bit - he's got a few final exhortations as it says in our Bible - but he's got a few final words. Kind of like, "Okay, if I'm going to put everything together as to what I've written you, let me kind of sum it up in a few verses." But between those two places, he has this little paragraph, verse two and three, about these two women. And part of you goes, "What is that all about? Like, why draw them out from the crowd?"

Here is what Paul is doing. Paul is saying, "Philippians, you as a church are doing great, you are on board and worshiping the Lord and you are growing in your faith. But some of you, specifically these two women, are being distracted by other things, and they're creating causes, and creating division, and they're creating issues within the church, which don't need to be there."

Paul, as he does in Philippians in the first three chapters in calling for unity, says, "In all things, work together because we are all worshiping the same Lord." We are all striving to work together in pleasing Him. When we do that, we will, as a church, be effective. As individuals, we will also be able to feel and enjoy the peace of God.

But notice his change so quickly. He's like, "Okay, this is an issue we need to deal with... but... Philippians 4:4, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" That is the resounding theme of Philippians. This aspect of joy in the Lord. This aspect of being in a place in which you can experience the joy of God. For some of us, we might say, "You know what? That's great because life right now is good." And it's easy to be joyful when life is good. But what about life when it's not as good? How do you be joyful in times like that?

Let's look forward a few months to December. One of our favorite Christmas carols from years gone past is, "Joy to the world." Let me tell you, the Israelites at that point were not in a good place. They were not singing "hallelujah" under the rule of the Romans. So it's not about our circumstances as we hear later in chapter four, but it is about our heart and where our heart is with God. When you can see that God is present just like God came to earth at Christmas, and he is Emmanuel, and he is God with us, and as we talked, and as we sang this morning about being in God's presence, when you can see that God's presence is here, then life can always be about joy. You can be in that state of joy.

Now, he says in Philippians 4:5, "Let your gentleness be evident to all." Gentleness. I find it kind of interesting here that he picks only one of the fruit of the Spirit. Maybe the people in Philippi needed to be reminded of being gentle to each other. Maybe he thought, "Well, I just scolded a couple of people. I need to remind people to be gentle to each other." But here again, he is taking the fruit of the spirit that we read about in Galatians 5:22. He's saying, "This is the way your life should be. Live a life in which others will see you as gentle, as kind, as one who has self control, as one who lives for other people."

And then Philippians 4:6, "Do not be anxious about anything... " If only life was that easy. If only we could say, "Hey, don't be anxious... I'm not anxious anymore." We all know that doesn't work. Right? We have all kinds of anxiety within our society. We have all kinds of places in which we are anxious, and sometimes a little bit of anxiety is good. Sometimes it keeps us from doing things that we shouldn't do. But sometimes, anxiety can also be debilitating. It can be this place where you're going, "I want to be able to do this and I can't. I'm just not there." Paul says here in those anxious moments, "What's your first thought?" Is your first thought one of, "Oh, I should be able to do this? I'm going to make myself do this?" Is your first thought, "Uh, why am I so anxious? This really shouldn't be so bad? I've done this before?"

Paul says, "Those moments when we get anxious, our first thought should be that we are in the presence of God in His throne room, and we should be in prayer." Now Paul is not saying, "Well, if you're anxious, pray about it and all your anxiety will go away." That's not what he's saying. But Paul is saying, "In those moments of anxiety, what is your first thought? Is your first thought to go to God our Father who gave His life for us and say, 'Lord, I need your help in this because the reality is we can't do everything that God can?'" And so are we at a place where we say when we get anxious, is our first thought, "Lord help me through this?"

Maybe the only thing we can pray at that time is, "Lord, allow me to feel your presence even if I can't do it. Assure me of your love. Assure me that you have me in your hand, and help me to rest in that." I think too often people take this verse and they go, "Oh, we shouldn't be anxious. To be anxious is wrong." But to be anxious is human. All Paul is saying is, "If you, in the first moment of that anxiety, can take away from making it about you, and you having to do it but say instead, "Lord, I am in your hands. Give me the strength today to do what I'm capable of doing and to be okay with that because I know that I am loved by you." Don't be anxious. Be in prayer.

And it says that prayer is with thanksgiving. I don't know about you, but there's not too many times when I am anxious where I'm going, "Lord, Dear God, thank You that I am anxious today because it's making my life so much easier." I'm not thanking God for anxiety. I'm thanking God for His presence. I'm thanking God that when I'm anxious, I am not alone. I am constantly in a mind of gratitude, saying, "Lord, thank You that You are here with me. That even though the waters may overwhelm me, I will be upheld by your righteous right hand." Then it says in Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

At Christmas time, there are two words which often come out. Joy and peace. Those terms are gifts from God. True peace comes because God is here with us. So we live in that place of peace. Sometimes we don't understand it. I think each of us could tell a situation in our life looking back at it, where we say, "This was just horrible. I don't know how I got through this but somehow, I knew even in the middle of that space, that God was with me." And there was a peace there. Not this happiness and "everything is all right." But there is an underlying peace that says God is here with me and I am not alone. No matter what happens here, God will still be there. That is the peace.

That fits back to our anxiety as well, that no matter what happens, God will still be there. God will still love you and me, his son and daughter, as we are. In some ways, we need to make a mind-change again when it says in Philippians, to have the same mindset of Christ. You know, what does that look like? The aspect is not on ourselves and our self sufficiency - which we live in a world in which that's what we're taught, "you need to be self sufficient"... but here's a mindset in which we go to Christ's sufficiency and He will supply, which is what we read in Philippians 4:8&9.

Which we talked about a couple of weeks ago, about when we change our mindset into those places of thinking about what is noble, and true, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable, and excellent, and praiseworthy. When we've learned to do those kinds of things, notice at the end of Philippians 4:9 again it says, "And the God of peace will be with you." So here Paul is talking to the Philippians and saying, "If we're going to sum up everything, everything that I've written to you in just a couple of words of what you need to remember, if you can remember... there's joy in God and He gives you peace. Then you can remember most other things because our first thought is that aspect of being in God's presence. When we are in God's presence, there is a peace.

Then Paul changes the subject just a little bit and he goes into this aspect of giving. Paul was a missionary. He depended on people to be generous, to supply what his needs were. And he thanks the Philippians for their generosity. In fact, he noticed that they were one of the few first people to support him. He was very gracious and thankful for that. But Paul says something in there in Philippians 4:11, "I'm not saying this because I'm in need. So I'm not writing to you Philippians saying, "Hey guys, I'm out of money and I know you were helpful before so do you think you can dig down and pull out a few bits of coin for me so that I can continue to do God's ministry?" He doesn't start with a guilt trip and say, "Hey, guys, you need to help me out here." Paul says, "You guys have been so generous and that's great. I'm not telling you this because I'm in need, because I have learned as he says in Philippians 4:11, "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need and I know what it is to have plenty." This aspect of contentment. What does it mean to be content? To be at a place where you are okay with what is going on?

This week, I read a poem by Jason Lehmann and apparently he wrote it at age 14. The wisdom in this is astounding, about being content. It reads this way...

It was Spring,
But it was Summer I wanted,
The warm days,
And the great outdoors.
It was Summer,
But it was Fall I wanted,
The colorful leaves, And the cool, dry air.
It was Fall, But it was Winter I wanted,
The beautiful snow, And the joy of the holiday season.

It was Winter, But it was Spring I wanted,
The warmth, And the blossoming of nature.
I was a child, But it was adulthood I wanted,
The freedom, And respect. I was twenty,
But it was thirty I wanted,
To be mature,
And sophisticated. I was middle-aged, But it was twenty I wanted,
The youth, And the free spirit. I was retired,
But it was middle-age I wanted,
The presence of mind,
Without limitations.
My life was over.
But I never got what I wanted.

And Paul was saying, "Can you be content in whatever situation you are? Can you be content knowing that God is there with you in that space, and be present in that moment?" How much of life is wasted longing for something that is yet to come? And when we get there, we go, "Oh, I wish I would have enjoyed that time more when I had that." Paul says, "Whether I am in need right now or whether I've got plenty right now, I'm going to be present in that space and be content in where God has me at that moment."

Then there is Philippians 4:13. This is a verse which is often used. A lot of people know Philippians 4:13, "I can do all this through Christ who gives me strength." Other translations, "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength." One thing about Scripture is you always need to read in context. What was Paul just talking about? Being content. So it's not that this verse is saying, "You figure out what you want to do, and Christ will help you do it."

I will never be a master musician. No matter how much I pray for it, it ain't gonna happen. But that's not what Paul is talking about. Paul is just talking about being content. He realizes that we can't have willpower on our own to be content. We need Christ to work through us to help us to be content. He is saying in this place, and the NIV does a great job with this, "I can do all of this through Him who gives me strength." I can be content whether I have lots or whether I have little.

Once you are at that stage, then he goes to the next place of giving. Giving is always one of these subjects where you go, "How do we deal with this? How do we deal with the aspect of giving to God what is God's?" In Malachi 3:10, we read, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it." Being content is that place where you say, "Whatever it is that God has given me, I am going to return some of it to him."

There was a story about a grandfather who took his grandson out to McDonald's and bought him fries. So the grandson was eating the fries and the grandfather said, "Can I have one?" And the grandson said, "Get your own." [Congregation laughing.] The grandfather's first thought was, "Hold on, I bought these for you. I paid for them. I could have just bought myself some and said, "Here, do you want one? But I gave you the whole bit and I'm just asking for one." We all see the silliness of that. Now I ask this question, "How much of what you have was given to you by God?" And we might think, "Well, I have a job. I worked for it. I got a paycheck. I bought it. I got it."

I guess the question is, "Who gave you the ability to get a job? Who created a workspace for you? Who gave you the mind and the hands and the aspect that you need for your job, to be able to do the job? Who gives you health and breath each day?" I think back when we really look at it, we understand that in many ways, God is that grandfather who bought us fries. And then God says, "Can I have one?"

In Malachi, God says, "You test me. You give me fries back. And I'll tell you, you'll have so many french fries, you won't know what to do with them." And Paul says this to the people of Philippi and he says this not in a way in which you should feel guilty for this. What Paul does is he says this in Philippians 4:17, "Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account." In the end of Philippians 4:18 and 4:19 it says, "They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus." Paul was telling the Philippians, "Look guys, there is no way you can outgive God." When you give to the heart of God, it will bless not only you but everyone around you.

William Barclay wrote this, "Paul's joy in the gift is not what it did for him, but in what it did for them... Paul lays it down that no gift ever made any man the poorer. The wealth of God is open to those who love him and love their fellow-men. He who gives makes himself richer, for his own gift opens to him the gifts of God." Paul says to the Philippians, "You are a generous group. Don't forget to give. Today, Paul says to us, "You're a generous group."

We've heard from the deacons so many times that we have a tremendous amount in the deacons fund. We are truly blessed with our faithful missional giving. We have plenty to help those who are spreading the Gospel all over. But Paul would also say to us, "What about the ministries here at church? Do we spend all our time giving to those outside and forget about the 20 youth who are now in Sunday school or more? Forget about the over 25 that meet here on Wednesday nights for youth? Forget about the 50 women who gather for coffee break? Forget about the other parts of our ministry which are here? Forget about coffee after service? That important time of fellowship and connecting with each other in the body of Christ?" And Paul says, like Malachi, "Bring in the whole pie."

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 says, "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."

God invites us to participate in His ministry here at Living Hope, and to be part of it, and to be blessed by it, but also to bless other people with it. In the Old Testament, sacrifices and offerings were an act of worship. It was that space in which we could say to God, "Thank you so very much for everything you have done." It is interesting that Paul talks about this right after he talks about, "Do not be anxious." Because how much of our anxiety comes because we are afraid we don't have enough or that we won't have enough. And God says, "I will take care of your needs. I will provide."

Now, I'm not saying that there are not people who have needs. We have people that we know within the city of Peterborough. We have people who do not have their needs met right now. As a church, we need to say, "How do we help support those needs? And how do we give to the church to support people in those places of need?" It is that way in which we can bless each other as well.

Then I think about our greatest need. Our greatest need is not financial. Our greatest need is a cleansing of our heart. Our greatest need as humanity is to be forgiven of their sins. I think about how God said, "Let me meet your greatest need." And so he sent His son Jesus to come and to die as we read in Philippians 2:5, "have the same mindset as Christ Jesus..." who gave up everything so that we could live with Him.

Giving, in many ways, is sacrificial. Jesus said, "I give of myself and I give all that I have including my life for you." And so he laid down his life for each of us. Jesus laid down his life for _____ - and you can fill in your name - and in doing so, Jesus says, "I invite you now to come to the table. I invite you to come and taste and see the gift that I have given you. And Jesus gathered with his disciples for the Passover meal and He took bread and He broke it.

I invite you to come and taste and see the gift that I have given you. Jesus gathered with his disciples for the Passover meal. He took bread and he broke it. In a place of fellowship, he said, "This represents my body. This represents my sacrificial gift to you." I invite you to gather around today with fellow believers and share in that meal and share in the place in which God says, "I have given it all to you so that we may commune together."

I would like to invite the elders that I spoke to to come forward and they will pass out the bread. Can I invite you to just take it and hang on to it and then we will eat together.
[Elders pass out bread while the worship team is playing music.]

Jesus took the bread and he broke it. He handed it to his disciples. He said, "Take, eat. Remember, believe that the joy of God and the peace of God comes through my gift to you. Take it."

[Congregation eats bread.]

After supper, Jesus took the cup and he said, "This is my blood which I have shed for you for redemption of all your sins." Again, I invite you to take it, to hang on to it, and we will drink together.

[Elders pass out juice while the worship team is playing music.]

Goodness abounds and God is so good to us. At this table, he invites us to share in that goodness, to share in His gift to us, to receive the peace that can only come from Him, and to live in the joy of God's everlasting presence. Take it, drink all of it. Remember and believe that our Lord Jesus Christ died and shed his blood so that we may live in His presence. Amen.

[Congregation drinks juice.]

Join me in prayer... Dear Lord, we come to you and we thank you for your gift of life. Lord, we thank you for your sacrificial life-giving death on the cross. Lord, in response, we come to you with our prayers of thanksgiving, with our prayers and our petition. Lord, we thank You that we may come to you at any time and anywhere into your throne room because of this gift. Lord, to help us to live our lives in that space, to be content, as you were content in the Garden of Eden, in that moment of crying out desperately if there was any other way. But knowing Lord, that the peace that only you can give and the strength that only comes from Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit would help him to do what you've called him to do. Lord, help us to live in that space. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Just before Jesus left, and just before he gave us the Lord's Supper, he also spoke with His disciples. In speaking with them, he gave them this piece where he says, John 16:22-24, "Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

John 16:32, "'A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone." (So he's predicting his death.) "Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. 33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." And Jesus said in John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you."

I invite you to extend your hands and receive the peace that God gives to Him, who is able to keep you from stumbling, to present you before his glorious throne without fault, with great joy, and with His peace. To the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages now and forevermore. Receive the joy of God. Receive the peace of God. Amen.

Transcribed by: Liza Perry