

Philippians 1:15-26 (New International Version 1984)

¹⁵ It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.

¹⁶ The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

¹⁸ 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,

¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.

²⁰ I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!

²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,

²⁶ so that through my being with you again your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me.

Happy New Year! I am grateful to God to be able to stand here this morning. Like many of you I have wrestled this week with the current bug, that can't be called the flu, because I got a flu shot. But whatever it is it has limited my activity this past week. But even with the chills and the fevers and the loss of energy and appetite I still have joy. I have joy because joy is not the result of what is happening in my life, joy is the knowledge that God will and does have the final Word.

So if you have any joy on this first Sunday of 2013 I invited you to stand and express your joy. Expressed joy is praise! Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. The modern day psalmist says "this joy that I have, the world didn't give it to me and the world can't take it away."

This is an important concept to hold on to when you are wrestling with the problems of this life. If you are ill, unemployed, worried about family members, struggling with issues at work, or whatever is going on in your life these outside forces can upset your apple cart, knock you off your square and make you unhappy. The happenings of the world impact happiness.

But joy does not come from the outside in - joy comes from the inside out. Remember Ms. Willie Mae told us when she was diagnosed with cancer that whatever happens she would be all right. That is a living testimony in our church of what true joy looks like.

Our lesson for this Sunday and the rest of January comes from Philippians, Paul's letter to the church at Philippi. The scholars tell us that Paul's writes this letter from a Roman jail. The purpose of the letter is two fold: first, to thank the church for their gift and secondly, to strengthen their faith in Jesus the Christ by sharing with them that true joy comes from Jesus.

We are not told why the church at Philippi needed to be reminded where "joy" really comes from so I will use my imagination and suggest that this church was like many churches today. They were experiencing some of the ups and downs that come with living in the world.

Research shows that they were the First Church of Philippi and not just the first church in that city they were the first Christian church in Europe. At the time of this writing they are about 10 years old and although they are a small church they are able to support Paul while he is in prison with gifts and a servant to aid him.

Because of their gifts, their care and their faithfulness Paul writes and tell them that he "pray(s) with joy because of your partnership in the gospel."

One of the sermons I previewed this week had the title of "Live Like You Are Dying" and although I did not find much in the text of the sermon that spoke to me I remained intrigued by the title. Perhaps because it reminds me of how I have often asked "What would you need to cleanup if Jesus was coming at 3:00?" Or the times I have challenged you to "dig up some of the stuff you have buried in your tent and burn it". I have even asked, "what kind of soil do you have in your pot", all metaphors and references to how you are living as a Christian.

Paul writes to strengthen the church at Philippi in the only way he knows how. He tells them how he is living and where he finds his strength.

Let us look at three of Paul's circumstances and see if we can find a Word this morning. Would you pray with me and for me as we consider **"How Can I Have Joy in the Midst of _____?"**

you are turning in circles trying to understand why
 you are wasting energy and resources trying to get to the root

The third thing we learn from Paul's letter is that Paul has decided that whatever the outcome of the trial in front of him he will be okay.

"How Can I Have Joy in the Midst of Waiting for the Outcome?"

Waiting for test results
 Waiting for outcome of a job interview
 Waiting for loan approval
 Waiting for the birth of a child
 Waiting for a child to get good sense

"How Can I Have Joy in the Midst of Chains?"

"How Can I Have Joy in the Midst of People Lying?"

"How Can I Have Joy in the Midst of Waiting for the Outcome?"

How Can I have Joy....

The words of King David

Psalms 30:5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

How Can I have Joy....

The words of the Angel of the Lord

Luke 2:10 "... I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord"

Christmas might be over - time to take down the decorations - put the manger scenes away - get ready for Black History month and Valentines Day - but we need to stop and remember the reason

How Can I have Joy....

The words of John the Beloved Disciple

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

14 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. **2** In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. **3** And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. **4** You know the way to the place where I am going."

I challenge you this week to look carefully at your circumstances and ask:

How am I glorifying God in this circumstances ?

What unique opportunities has God given me in this circumstances to glorify Him?

What can I do each day this week to live in Christ's power over the circumstances in my lives?