

“THE PEACE THAT PASSES ALL HUMAN COMPREHENSION”
OCTOBER 18, 2020, PENTECOST 20, SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON
(abbreviated COVID 19 service/50% seating capacity)
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson (Singers-Fuglebergs)

HYMN (#581 AH) “Like a River Glorious”

PRAYER

CHILDREN’S SERMON: *Philippians 4 “thankful prayer + wholesome thoughts = peace”*

EPISTLE LESSON: *Philippians 4:4-13 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 everything, 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, 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 rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been 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 everything through him who gives me strength.*

CONFESSION OF FAITH: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

GLORIA PATRI: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING

PRAISE SONG: Chosen by Carol.

SERMON TITLE: “THE PEACE THAT PASSES ALL HUMAN COMPREHENSION”
Philippians 4:4-9; Pastor Tom Olson; October 18, 2020

I did a Google search of famous people that didn’t have peace in their hearts. Abraham Lincoln suffered from serious depression. A very high percentage of rich, powerful and famous people lack peace in their hearts. On the contrary, I would say that most ordinary people with limited finances, simple jobs and no “power” or control over anyone are generally quite happy and their souls are at rest. The happiest man I ever met, Missionary Oscar Brown, gave away all his money at the end of every month. Quite a number of young people today lack peace. They are taking their own lives. This is extremely pronounced in the Alaskan villages but is almost

epidemic everywhere. Dr. Scott Jensen, State Senator and medical doctor from Carver, Minnesota recently said that the suicide epidemic is greater concern than the corona virus in his practice. I am not going to analyze this but we can say that a fair number of people out in our neighborhoods are lacking peace of heart and soul. Perhaps some of us here today are also looking for greater peace in our hearts. There is a deep and abiding peace and contentment that comes from God. If you learn to experience it, life gets so much better. Today we finish up the book of Philippians and chapter four gives us a simple and sure plan to experience the deep and glorious PEACE OF GOD THAT SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING.

I. REALITY: TENSION IS EVERYWHERE

Philippians 4:2&3 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. 3 Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

The New Testament church with powerful signs and wonders and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit had troubled people and hard issues to deal with. Here we have two leading women who had worked side by side with the Apostle Paul in the work of the gospel ministry now having a disagreement. This disagreement was so strong that it affected the church and caused the Apostle Paul to write to them about it. Perhaps the major reason for the book of Philippians is to resolve this disagreement. Peace was lacking in the church.

This is true in other places as well.

1 Corinthians 5:1 "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife."

Philippians 1:15 "...some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry..."

2 Timothy 4:15 "Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm."

- a. The church can't avoid difficulty because we are in a spiritual battle.
- b. But we can be peacemakers.
- c. The first step is to find that deep and abiding peace of God ourselves.

There are some people I know that have such a deep and abiding peace of God that it affects their entire surroundings. We had a man like that in our church in Ohio, Wendell Shelly. He was a farmer and a carpenter. One carpenter said that when Wendell was on the crew he just could not curse and swear because Wendell had a presence of God that affected the entire crew without him saying a word. I want to be like that, don't you? When I come in a room, I want the peace of God to come with me. The REALITY IS THAT TENSION IS EVERYWHERE.

II. PROTECTION: THE GUARD OF PEACE

Philippians 4:8&9 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 everything, 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.

Verse 7 tells us that there is "THE PEACE OF GOD" available. It is not intellectually apprehended through study or purchased with money. It "TRANSCENDS HUMAN UNDERSTANDING." This peace is there for us when it shouldn't be, it is greater than our problems. It can give surround you even in a political election year.

I have total peace about the presidential election, come what may. God has given this to me recently. This peace is available at all times. Here is how to get it:

- a. REJOICE**-Rejoice in the Lord, always. We can always rejoice in the finished work of Christ on the cross. We can always rejoice in the knowledge that the Lord is watching over us. Your life may be a mess but the cross and the care of God are always constant. Paul was languishing in jail and had little to be thankful for in his daily experience...but the cross and the surrender to a sovereign God gave him reason to continually rejoice. He could actually feel sorry for the people not in prison who were lost and in bondage to sin.
- b. PRAY**-Don't deny the reality of your troubles, Paul didn't. He listed his troubles quite plainly for people to pray about...prison, tormenters, envious competitors, cold, lack of good clothing and books to read, persecutions, even stoning, that at time people even left him for dead... What do we do with our real problems? We need to bring them to the throne of grace in prayer and leave them with God. This takes faith to give your problems to God and not try to solve them in your own way. Then to wait and listen and obey. This could be summed up with one word: SURRENDER. When Japan and Germany surrendered to the allied powers in World War II they got peace. And with that peace even came prosperity. But only after they surrendered. PRAYER IS SURRENDER. You say, "God I give up." And God says, "Finally, now I can do something good for you."
- c. GIVE THANKS**-I feel that the step of thanksgiving is something that we forget and it is absolutely a key thing. The giving of thanks is the "climax" of prayer. Thanksgiving is the great expression of faith. When we thank God for who He is and what He is going to do, it released a peace and joy that is beyond human comprehension.

This peace is a GUARD FOR YOU SOUL. He says here it will "guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus." We could make a very unusual statement that the PEACE OF GOD IS OUR GREATEST WEAPON AGAINST THE ENEMY. Peace is a weapon that guards us!

III. ABUNDANCE: THE GOD OF PEACE

Philippians 4:8-9 Finally, brothers, 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.

Then there is the final step to go even deeper. We can move from a protected state of peace into a life of abundance. Not necessarily material abundance but a broadness of soul that comes from the manifest presence of God in our lives. "Emmanuel" or "God with us." "Lo, I am with you always..."

This presence of God comes from two practices: a disciplined mind and obedience.

A. A DISCIPLINED MIND: it simply controlling our "self-talk" and our intake of mental stimuli. It is making the effort to think about the highest things and to keep our minds out of sinful or worthless thoughts and even much of what the media is pumping our way. It comes from turning the spigot of low value ideas off and tuning into excellent thoughts. Here is the summary of what those thoughts are like, "Whatever is TRUE, NOBLE, RIGHT, PURE, LOVELY, ADMIRABLE, EXCELLENT AND PRAISEWORTHY.

Don't fall into the trap of saying, "But this is the truth." It must not only be true but also admirable and praiseworthy and all the other qualifications. There are bad thoughts, good thoughts, better thoughts and the best thoughts. We are aiming here for the best. How do we get there? Scripture, good biographies, inspiring

stories, healthy interests, quality friendships with uplifting people, fine art, wholesome food, time in the out of doors, in God's creation. All such things are good resources of the best thoughts.

B. AN OBEDIENT LIFE: Paul says here that we need to do what we have learned from and seen in him. Faith can be described as a step of obedience. I can have faith in a chair but really don't express that faith until I sit in that chair. Action is a part of this equation. As God prompts you to do things, or stop doing things, just obey. Then he has the freedom to come into your life with a special presence. "The God of peace shall be "WITH" you.

What is the result of a disciplined mind and obedience? The result is abundance of soul, invincibility of life, overflowing joy and filled with the glory of God...a song in the heart and fear will flee. This is the "Fullness of the Spirit" that God wants us to experience...in spite of our circumstances. It is available for all who do what Philippians 4 says! And it doesn't cost money. It is merely drawing close to God who stands with arms wide open every day.

CONCLUSION: Has God spoken to you about something today? Won't you come close and find that "peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension and understanding? God won't force you...but God invites you. Jesus has made the way open by shedding His innocent blood on Calvary's cross for you and for me. Come in closer and experience the peace. Amen

PRAISE SONG: *Chosen by Carol.*

PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER: *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

BENEDICTION: The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and grant you peace. Amen

CLOSING CHORUS: *Chosen by Carol.*

POSTLUDE: Carol Gustafson