

ALL OF THE ABOVE THROUGH THE GOD OF LOVE

"Sent with the P.E.A.C.E. of Christ - Prayer"

January 10, 2021

Overarching theme: In 2021, FUMC will be SENT with the peace of Christ!

"Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you" –John 20:21

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point:

On Easter evening, the Risen Christ appears to his gathered disciples for the first time since Good Friday and speaks these words: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." Just as Jesus sent his disciples into a divided, conflicted 1st Century with his peace, so he sends us into a divided, conflicted 2021 with his peace.

Philippians:

Paul writes Philippians from prison (Phil 1:7, 13-19). He's to appear in court soon to face the charges against him. While the verdict could lead to execution, he expects he'll be released (Phil 1:24-26). According to Acts, Paul was in prison in Rome at the end of his life and in Caesarea just before that. He was in prison in other places, too, because he says in another letter that he's been in prison multiple times (2 Cor 11:23-27, 30-33). Since he lived in Ephesus for a few years, that may be one of the places he was imprisoned. If Philippians was written from Ephesus, it could have been written as early as 55 CE. Otherwise, it was written between 57 and 62 (the likely date of Paul's death), probably from Rome. So the letter comes from the later years of his ministry.

Philippians is known for its emphasis on joy. This joy or gladness isn't just happiness of the moment. It's a confident disposition rooted in hope. It shows trust in God's faithfulness to preserve believers for salvation. Believers have this gladness because they know that having problems, or even enduring harassment, doesn't mean God has deserted them. This joy helps the Philippians overcome fear and put aside their quarrels. Because of his confidence in God, Paul is able to put aside his personal needs and wants, even to suffer or to die, for their benefit – and to maintain Christian joy while doing it (Phil 2:17-18). Paul calls the Philippians to be glad about his suffering for them, because of the salvation they share. So this

gladness is a steady and hopeful disposition that shapes believers' lives as they rely on God's love for their salvation.

Even more central than its emphasis on joy is the letter's focus on problems in the Philippian church. Paul gives instructions about a dispute between two church leaders. Paul doesn't mention the problem directly until Philippians 4:2-3, where he calls these women by name and urges them to resolve their differences. Knowing that this dispute is disturbing the church, however, sheds a different light on Paul's calls for the Philippians to be united and to agree with each other (Phil 2:1-4). His mention of people who want to make his life difficult (Phil 1:15-17) shows that he knows what he's asking when he encourages them to get along.

-from the Common English Study Bible, NT pp 373-74

Reflect on these Scriptures:

Philippians 4:2-9 NRSV

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion,^[a] help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.⁴ Rejoice^[a] in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.^[b] ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry 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.⁸ Finally, beloved,^[c] whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about^[d] these things. ⁹ Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Commentary:

4:4-7. Paul repeats his command to rejoice, and this, too, is "in the Lord." Christians should be known for a quality that is rendered in both the NIV and the NRSV as "gentleness." The Greek term (*epieikes*) is more positive than that. It denotes generosity toward others and is a characteristic of Christ himself (cf. 2 Cor 10:1); the NEB's "magnanimity" and the REB's "consideration of others" catch its meaning. The affirmation that "the Lord is near" leads naturally into the injunction not to be anxious in v. 6, a saying that is reminiscent of Jesus' teaching in Matt 6:25-34. All prayer and supplication are to be accompanied by thanksgiving, something that has characterized the whole of this letter. The result will be that the peace of God will guard their hearts and minds "in Christ Jesus." The peace promised here is far more than an absence of conflict. Rather, it is total well-being,

and it comes from God – once again, to those who in Christ Jesus and who share his attitude, so that his “heart and mind” become theirs.

4:8-9. Paul’s final appeal is to “think about” various admirable qualities, all of which are appropriate to those whose minds are guarded by Christ. Although the appeal in v. 8 is not specifically Christian, that in v. 9 is. Since Christ is himself the embodiment of all the virtues listed in v. 8, there is a logical link between Paul’s appeal to “think about” these things and to “put into practice/keep on doing” what they have “learned and received” from Paul.

– adapted from the *New Interpreter’s Bible Commentary*, Vol XI p. 540-41

This week – “Prayers”

The Philippian church was rife with conflict. Conflict that needed healing. Any lasting healing of relationships, including national wounds, will not take place in the absence of a humble, prayerful heart. II Chronicles 7:14 puts it this way: *if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

In Chapter 4, Paul applies this prayer principle to an example of conflict in the Philippian church: *I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.* In Chapter 2, Paul reminded the Philippians to *“have the same mind...that was in Christ Jesus...who humbled himself.* Prayer from a humble heart has a way of shaping our souls with the peace of Christ. This inner peace can help us to be at peace with others, aiding in the healing of relationships.

Paul then offers some specific instruction about prayer itself. Begin with

Adoration

⁴ *Rejoice^[a] in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.^[b]*

One way of adoring God is by praying one of the great Psalms of praise – 8, 100, 103, 150

Confession comes next, and can have dual meanings. Confession can reflect our convictions, as in confessing that Jesus Christ is “God with us” or *The Lord is near.* But we also confess when we have distanced ourselves from God through sin/selfishness (sins of commission and omission – what we have omitted doing). That acknowledgement, coupled with God’s promise to forgive, allows us to draw near to the One who is ever near. Again, confession is good for the soul and enables us to experience the nearness, presence and power of God.

Then **Thanksgiving**.

⁶ *Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication **with thanksgiving** let your requests be made known to God.* While thanksgiving to God is an obvious calling for people of faith, we can be oblivious to the gifts of God. So this aspect of prayer challenges us to practice thanksgiving in the face of worry/anxiety, reminding us of the past faithfulness of God. Anxiety can grow when we momentarily forget, in the midst of adverse circumstances, that if *his eye is on the sparrow, I know he watches me*. Thanksgiving is a fitting response to our faithful God and is a God-given antidote to worry/anxiety.

So, reminded of how God has seen us through in the past and in light of a renewed sense of God's faithfulness through the practice of Thanksgiving, we then *let our requests be made known to God*. We ask God to supply our needs through **Supplication**.

So in this passage we see a familiar **ACTS** acronym to help us remember that practices of prayer:

Adoration – rejoice!

Confession – to experience the nearness of God

Thanksgiving – remembering God's faithfulness

Supplication – making our requests known to God.

The result? V. 7 - *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*

Questions to Ponder for accountability in the group:

As you think about this passage, how can you respond to this Scripture?

1. Why do you think that conflict is such a common human experience?
2. When you are conflicted within, how might prayer be helpful?
3. In navigating conflict with others, have you ever found prayer to be beneficial? If so, in what way?
4. The A.C.T.S. acronym is one way to remind us to grow in different aspects of prayer – Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. Which of these comes most natural for you? Which might be a growing edge?

Activity for the life of a disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMC.
2. Ponder and pray on this Scripture this week: Philippians 4:4-7 NRSV
⁴ Rejoice^[a] in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.^[b] ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not worry 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.
3. This week, try the A.C.T.S. prayer pattern. Report to your group how it went next week.