

GOD DREAMS: Seeds of God's Dream

February 27, 2022

Overarching Theme: 2022 – *The Year of the Lord's Favor* (Luke 4:19)

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:

As the world awakens from almost 2 years of pandemic stupor, the words of Jesus proclaiming "the year of the Lord's favor" is a dream whose time has come. This passage from Luke 4 harkens back to the 'year of jubilee' of Leviticus 25 and Isaiah 61, a year of a fresh start, a clean slate and reset for everyone who can dream God's dream.

Reflect on this Scripture: *Philippians 4:15-23* ¹⁵ *You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. ¹⁶ For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once. ¹⁷ Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. ¹⁸ I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. ²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The friends who are with me greet you. ²² All the saints greet you, especially those of the emperor's household. ²³ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*

This Week: *Philippians 4:15-23*

The gifts provided by the Philippian church were brought by one of their own, Epaphroditus. While the church in Philippi was far from affluent (Paul describes the poverty of the Macedonian churches in 2 Corinthians 8:2), they were the most consistently generous. Paul writes that their gifts were "*a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.*" Though the gifts were offered to Paul, they have in effect been offered to God, since they are being used for "the defense and confirmation of the gospel" (1:7). It seems, then, that the account is being held with God and that the Philippians are storing up treasure in heaven (cf. Matt 6:20; 19:21).

It will be God, therefore, who recompenses them (v. 19). The unusual phrase "my God" (see also 1:3) is not intended to imply that Paul's God is not the God of the Philippians also; indeed, in the very next verse he refers to "our God." If he speaks of "my God" here, it is because he wishes to stress that he is relying on God to do for him what he is unable to do for himself. His God will "fully satisfy/supply" all their needs, just as Paul has been "fully satisfied/supplied" by the Philippians. Moreover, God will do this "according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus"; since God's riches are immeasurable, God is able to meet every conceivable need. And the gifts of the Philippians will also bear great fruit in spreading the good news. Even members of the imperial guard (Phil 1:13) and the emperor's household are responding to the gospel (Phil 4:22)! Who knows what God can do through the seeds that are sown?

-Adapted from New Interpreters Commentary, Vol XI, p. 545

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. Philippians, Paul's most joyous letter, was written while he was incarcerated in less than favorable circumstances in Rome. What accounts for his joy?
2. Why do you think that the Philippians, a relatively poor church, were the most consistent investors (or seed sowers) in Paul's ministry dream?
3. How does Paul think God will bless them in return? What other blessings might they be receiving from knowing that their gifts are advancing God's dream in Rome?
4. What are some ways that we can follow the example of the Philippians today?
5. Paul declares that even some in Nero's household were coming to faith in Christ and sent their greetings to the Philippians. Why was it important that Paul include this detail in his thank you to the Philippians?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC
2. Prayerfully reflect about what you will do with your household's **Lenten Seed Gift** during this season.
3. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: ***Philippians 4:17-19*** ¹⁷ *Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. ¹⁸ I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*