



new life fellowship

Sermon Title: Choosing Joy: The Big Picture

Speaker: Sherin Swift, Associate Pastor

Scripture: Philippians 1:27-30

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Philippians 1:27-30 (NIV)

Sermon Outline:

Paul continues choosing joy over and over again, despite many obstacles and being in prison. He encourages the Philippians to cultivate joy. Paul does not ask them to be mindlessly joyful and ignore their pain and be in denial of their circumstances. Paul is very aware of reality - as he is writing this letter from his prison cell and he knows he may be executed for spreading the gospel. But in Paul's mind, whether he lives or dies, he wins. If he lives, he will continue to labor for Jesus, spreading the gospel message. If Paul dies, then he will be with Jesus. Because Paul sees his situation as a win-win, he is can cultivate joy in his suffering.

Paul knows that the Philippians are going to need this kind of joy too. He is preparing the Philippians for the persecution that will come upon them, as they will face a new level of suffering for Christ. Because the Philippians have witnessed Paul's suffering and his ability to cultivate joy at the same time, they know that they too could experience the same joy.

The mark of joy on a Christian's life is the way we acknowledge the grief we are living through, and still have joy that the rest of the world doesn't have. Doing so, does not mean that we are to deny our present reality. We cultivate joy in the Christian life by remembering all that Christ has done for us, even in spite of our circumstances.

In v.27 Paul says to "conduct yourselves..." The particular word here that Paul uses alludes to citizenship and allegiance to a particular group or club. He is trying to make clear to the Philippians that they have a higher obligation to the kingdom of God, that they are citizens of heaven and they belong to a place that is not here yet.

God has claimed us, and we are His. We are not meant to be fully comfortable here, that this is not to be our normal.

Paul's message is also a word for us today. As we find ourselves in this global pandemic, we are all disrupted by this new situation we find ourselves in. Although we are all separated like never before, we can still strive together and labor as one. When you look out for your neighbor, when you show compassion for someone – we are all serving as one as witness to this gospel.

Sometimes we need to follow Jesus into suffering. Christ is with you no matter what you are going through. He knows suffering, pain and sorrow. In this unusual time as we are separated, you are never actually alone. If you have put your faith in Jesus, you are never truly alone. You can cultivate and choose joy in all your circumstances, because there is no true isolation – no room is truly empty. We are connected to one another by the Holy Spirit.

Joy is a byproduct of faith and hope.

Sermon Summary:

This Sunday, Associate Pastor Sherin Swift, continues our series through the book of Philippians. Today Pastor Sherin highlights how Paul chose joy in his circumstances and how we are to mark our lives by joy in our present circumstance.

Sermon Questions:

1. How does this scripture connect for you the topic that was discussed today? What words resonate with you? Why?
2. In your family or origin, how did they express joyful emotions as well as anger, grief and sadness? Were both positive and negative feelings acknowledged and/or allowed for expression? Did your family intentionally cultivate moments of joy together? If so, how?
3. "The mark of joy on a Christian's life is a powerful mark." Have you ever seen or experienced anyone that was "marked by joy?" Have you ever just known that someone was a Christian? How did you know? What is your life "marked" by?
4. What thoughts and feelings come up for you when you hear the words that as citizens of heaven, we have a deeper connection and a sense of obligation to the kingdom of heaven?
5. What may be one way that God is asking you to be united with your brothers and sisters in Christ as a witness to the gospel today?
6. Share your thoughts on the following: By grace we believe in Him. We follow Jesus into victory and into His suffering. This is the cost of discipleship.
7. Even through this difficult time where all of us have been affected by the global pandemic, we can choose to cultivate joy. What is one thing that you can do today to choose joy?