

WELCOME 25 November 2018 – Christ the King/Day of Fulfillment '18 B

Philippians 4:1-20

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! It is great to have you here. Please stay with us for morning tea after worship...this is where God builds his family...

When I was in high school, & the computer revolution was in its infancy, the pioneers in the field discovered a universal truth & in doing so coined a brand new word. The truth: *If the raw data is bad, the computer can't do anything good with it.* And the word: GIGO – garbage in garbage out. What you put into a computer determines what comes out. Your primary school teacher probably told you the same thing about your body: “You are what you eat.” & the obesity epidemic & some stuff you find on the internet prove that truth daily!

Some research suggests the average person has about 10,000 separate thoughts each day? Each of those thoughts represents a choice, a decision to think about this, & not about that...Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Beware of what you set your mind on because that you surely will become.”

Paul wrote, *Fix your thoughts on what is true, & honorable, & right, & pure, & lovely, & admirable. Think about things that are excellent & worthy of praise.*

Where has your mind been this week...where has it been today...where has it been in the last 2 minutes? Paul says God has a purpose for our minds...our hearts... our lives. That purpose? joy in his presence and peace & contentment in all things.

We'll explore & experience that this week...

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Let's pray...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

“I will rescue those who love me.

I will protect those who trust in my name.

When they call on me, I will answer;

I will be with them in trouble.

I will rescue and honour them.

I will reward them with a long life

and give them my salvation.” Ps 91:14-16

Lord, show us your face again today. Draw us closer to You through this season so that we can know You like never before. We trust your hand in all things...and especially this thing. Through the darkest place shine the light of your love. Father, you hold us always, so remind us to hold those around us. Give us the joy of seeing your will come to its fullness. Through Jesus Christ...Amen.

CHRIST THE KING '18 B – THE PRESENCE OF JOY: LIVING FOR JOY

FAITH CHAT:

1. Share 2 blessings & 2 wants. I reckon we could list 10-12 but let's keep it at 2.
2 things you are incredibly grateful for & 2 things you really want.
2. Which would have a greater impact, gaining all the things you currently want or losing all the things for which you are grateful? Why do you think that is? Most of us realize that we already have so very much for which to be grateful, that adding more to that can scarcely add to our sense of contentment/fulfillment.

Leona Bogish was a senior saint in the 1st congregation I served in South Texas. Whenever she saw you the first/last words to leave her mouth: "Blessings to you." ^{w/o} fail, every conversation with Mrs. Bogish began/ended ^{w/} those words. She literally lived & breathed Ps103: *Bless the Lord, O my soul, & all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, & do not forget all his benefits — He forgives all my sins & heals all my diseases. He redeems me from death & crowns me with love & tender mercies. He fills my life with good things. My youth is renewed like the eagle's!* She was locked in – fixed on - her mind was filled with thankfulness for God's love active in her life. She filled herself to overflow ^{w/} praise...joy just poured out.

Her life had not always been easy...she had tragedies that would buckle most of us... but **THAT** was how she engaged the world into her 90's. I know more than a few people just like her. I don't get "blessings to you" very often, but that's ok.

BUT...I've met tons of folks who are exactly opposite. They live a dreary existence. These are people who don't like their families (no one rises to their expectation). Seem to try to alienate their kith & kin. Someone else would always do better. Don't like their jobs. Don't like their income. They live a kind of a situational misery that really is personal misery imposed on every situation. Even if the if the situation changes; they remain miserable. Always find a reason to be miserable...

I've been thinking about that this week as we have been personally & communally up to our armpits in genuine misery....grief...tragedy...looking for joy in all that...and I have to keep coming back to what Paul taught us from the outset: Joy is the soul-deep persistent confidence & delight in God & his sovereignty & purpose in all things. Look at vs 1: *Therefore, my dear brothers & sisters, ~~stay true to~~ (stand firm in) the Lord. I love you & long to see you, dear friends, for you are my joy & the crown I receive for my work.* First: "therefore" What's it there for? What's Paul pointing back to – referencing?

This...3:20-21 - *But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. He will take our weak mortal bodies & change them into glorious bodies like his own, using the same power with which he will bring everything under his control.* Paul promises God has our lives pointed in the direction of ultimate joy...from weak & mortal to glory like his.

So...*therefore*...we live forward into – toward – for that joy...We lean into that promise – we stretch for that hope - keep our hearts focused on Jesus Christ the One who destroyed death/sin/evil & gives us his victory because we know the day is coming when this weakness this futility this fragility this decaying dying flesh is going to be transformed into an eternal unbreakable replica of the original one-and-only Son of God. We will experience the resurrection in all its glorious power & fullness. *Therefore stand firm in the Lord*...Since that's where you're being led, don't take your eyes off the Leader

Seriously...Where else are you going to stand? Remember Jn 6 Jesus asks the 12 if they're going to walk off like others were doing & Peter says, *"Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life."* *Therefore stand firm in the Lord* 132 times in Paul's letters he points to our being "in Christ." We live "in Christ" like a fish lives "in water." There is no existence outside of Christ...*"apart from me you can do nothing."* Oh you can do stuff...not a bit of it lasts...none of it sees the driveway of eternity.

We are indivisibly linked in a common life in Christ. *My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me & gave himself for me.* Gal 2:20 Paul says I live that soul-deep persistent confidence & delight in God & his sovereignty & purpose in all things because no matter what happens in my life in my circumstances Christ is in it with me & he will see me through all the way to my resurrection & beyond...God has our lives pointed in the direction of ultimate joy.

And because of that assurance of joy...because joy is our final destination...*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need thanking him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts & minds as you live in Christ Jesus.* When you pray (about everything) take your life/cares/burdens to the Father, thanking him for all he has done, he replaces your worries with something much greater: the peace that passes all human understanding. Here's what's pretty awesome...When we

think of “peace” the picture our minds create is of absence. Peace for most of us is the absence of strife or struggle or distress or mobile phones...That’s not this.

Verse 7 says that peace will “guard” your heart. Paul uses a military metaphor usually associated w/ soldiers guarding the city gate from the inside. When you pray (about everything thanking God for all he has done), God’s peace becomes a guard on your heart, protecting you from the worries & fretting that could otherwise destroy you. When you pray (about everything thanking God for all he has done), God’s peace becomes his active presence within you...which fosters that soul-deep persistent confidence & delight in God & his sovereignty & purpose in all things because no matter what happens in my life in my circumstances Christ is in it with me & he will see me through all the way to my resurrection & beyond...

Then there’s this...“...one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, & honorable, & right, & pure, & lovely, & admirable. Think about things that are excellent & worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned & received from me—everything you heard from me & saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.”

Every now & then...Paul gives us something that needs almost no explanation. His last admonition...last instruction for his friends in Philippi is simple...fill your conscious thoughts with that which is good. Don’t give your mind a moment to wander off into stuff that is unhelpful. Don’t let your thoughts go negative...don’t dig up that ancient grudge that old slight those hurt feelings...don’t dwell on the one that got away...the unfair reprimand from your 2nd grade teacher or your boss...

Anchor your mind in a place that is hopeful & beautiful. We made a short list of things for which we are grateful...add to it every day...Surround yourself with people who live that way...fill your ears with music that is beautiful & honourable & permeates your life with Christ’s love for you & joy in his presence...Fill your eyes with images & words that uplift & instruct & bring a smile to your face...Cut off social media...all the research says those platforms do you no good whatsoever. If you want to stay in touch with your friends pick up the phone or write them a letter.

If the research is right & you have 10,000 separate thoughts each day, & each of those thoughts represents a choice, a decision to think about this, & not about that; make every thought captive to Christ. Make those thoughts the fruit of what you know to be true about your life in Christ. Recently I read...You are not what you think you are. But what you think, you are. What do you tell yourself about you? What words do you use to describe or talk about yourself? If you are a parent, what do you say to your children about who they are? Ps 1...

Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day & night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, & they prosper in all they do.

Fix your thoughts on what is true, & honorable, & right, & pure, & lovely, & admirable. Think about things that are excellent & worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned & received from me—everything you heard from me & saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.

Never forget...you are so precious & beloved of the Father that he sent Jesus to live die & rise again so that you could live in His presence always. When your conscious thinking moves from that foundation...live intentionally from that good news Jesus, pulls you up from the muck & mire of this broken world. He pulls you up from bitterness, up from futility, up from resentment, up from anger, up from compromise, up from fear, up from dishonesty, up from selfishness, up from greed, up from pessimism, and up from despair...and into joy...into hope...into love...into life...into freedom...into peace...into patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, & self-control.

Then the God of peace will be with you. God has a purpose for our minds...our hearts... our lives. That purpose? Joy in his presence and peace & contentment in all things.

Let’s pray with that in mind...

Father God take control of my mind, rule over my heart, send your Spirit to guide my thoughts and inclinations until every part of me reflects your love, grace and mercy. You alone are the author of joy and peace beyond human comprehension and I pray that your gifts flourish in me so I can share them with others. Thank you for every blessing I enjoy and also for those things that cause me to turn to you with tears in my eyes. Teach me to trust you more deeply each day, through Jesus Christ...Amen