

## WELCOME 8<sup>th</sup> October 2023 – 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost '23 A

Philippians 2:1-30

**Welcome!** It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have in your hands **Growing Praise** inserts & **Bible Study Qs** that are able to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.** Link will be on website...Tuesday...Wednesday...

**As we move into this week...**

Australians all let us rejoice, For we are one and **free...**

When we stand as **one** & sing **one** tune we're supposed to do so as a **united** people. The National Anthem is intended for all Australians, lifelong or recent arrival, to **sing AS ONE**. Yet as a nation we seem more divided; less tolerant & more polarised than ever. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer...less than 1 in 4 Australians **would** "offer to help" someone who disagreed w/ their worldview. About 1 in 5 of us **would** "willingly live" in the same neighbourhood & fewer **still** would "want to work" w/ those who differ in their view of the world. When that national division & personal avoidance is played out on the streets...it can get ugly. It appears we've lost our unified purpose & heart as a people. We are ONE... **Who** are we kidding? **AND...**

Politics can't speak to that. Votes & legislation can't fix what's broken among us. Social justice initiatives routinely fail to deliver real lasting help. Only the good news of Jesus unites people & gives them a purposeful joy that transforms lives **AND** communities. Only the gospel makes enemies friends & engages them as one in pursuing the highest good for their neighbours...whether or not they are alike in any way. Purposeful joy is grounded in Christ & grows to fulfilment as it is poured out for others. That's the opportunity the Spirit creates for us everywhere we are, every day we live. *God is working in you, giving you the desire & the power to do what pleases **him**.*

*Let's pray...and then explore & experience that together...*

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

*Open our hearts & spirits to hear your healing words of peace and love, O God. Make us the people of service and justice that you have called us to be. Strengthen us as those who heal rather than harm; & serve rather than sever. Give us hearts of joy & peace as we abide in your presence, we pray in Jesus' Name. AMEN.*

*Let's hear God's word...*

### **FAITH CHAT:**

1. How is humility different from being a doormat?
  - How is Christian humility an active lifestyle rather than a passive one?
2. How would the lifestyle Paul commends radically reshape 2023 Wagga Wagga?

## 19 PENTECOST '23 A – THE PANDEMIC OF JOY: PURPOSEFUL JOY

w/o question I bear a physical resemblance to my dad. Similarly, I could pass for a young version of my Mother's father. Genetics what they are I am, like you I suspect, a mix of the family lineages from which I spring; & if we brought my sister in here...you'd spot the likeness. But more than physically... like most families, we passed on various habits, turns of phrase, faith, worldviews, & perspectives one generation to the next. Every now & then one of our girls will say something & I'd swear my grandmother or dad just walked into the room & I know, beyond a doubt, they've quoted *ME*...quoting the generation or so older than me. Intentionally or not...families pass things on...

As Paul writes to the church in Philippi (& by extension to you & me...LW as Christ's church) he says that same handing on is to happen here as well...but we are to be intentional...on purpose for a purpose. He begins this portion of the letter this way: Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender & compassionate? Then fulfil (complete) my joy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, & working together with one mind & purpose. Those 4 questions are rhetorical...they're written assuming "Yes" is the answer...It'd be like me saying, If there're any fish in the sea, tea in China or cowboys in Texas...Can almost read it: Since you know even in suffering there is encouragement in Christ & comfort in his love...Since you know we are all filled w/ linked in & saturated by the Holy Spirit...& since you know we share mutual love, tenderness & compassion for one another *then/therefore* make my joy complete, fulfilled...How? **First...**keep your eyes on those Yes-s...

Encouragement, comfort, being brought together by the Spirit in mutual love tenderness & compassion is only possible among those gathered by Jesus Christ ...brought together by God coming to us personally to rescue, renew & make complete his creation by Christ's life/death/rez. A world where 3 out of 4 people say if your worldview, lifestyle, beliefs, attitudes or values are different from mine I will not help you out of a jam...can only be healed & drawn together in Jesus. The life of the church was exhibit #1. *All the believers met together in one place & shared everything they had. They sold their property & possessions & shared the money with those in need...All the believers were united in heart & mind. They felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had.* – Acts 2:44-45 & 4:32 2 wks ago...radical unity in Christ & radical generosity because of Christ...only among those in Christ...

Remember last week Paul concluded the 1<sup>st</sup> part of his letter like this...*I want you to know, dear brothers & sisters, everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. EVERYTHING...*being arrested in Jerusalem, shipped to Rome as a

prisoner, battered in a storm at sea for a fortnight, shipwrecked on Malta, bitten by a snake ...God has used *EVERYTHING* to further spread the good news of Jesus. God is at work in your life everywhere you are every day you live so Christ can make himself visible in you. And *because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence & boldly speak God's message without fear.* Even the threat under which I live, when seen as God at work in me, points to him & gives other people boldness, courage & forthright faith...I can always be a witness to believers & not-yet-believers. It's happening. Only the good news of Jesus unites people & gives them a purposeful joy that transforms lives *AND* communities. So 1<sup>st</sup>, keep your eye on those Yes-s...what is already yours in Jesus Christ.

**Second...**keep yourselves locked heart to heart hand in hand with one another...agree wholeheartedly w/ each other, love one another, & work together w/ one mind & purpose... In Christ: we are indispensable to one another. My life is diminished if I lose you as a brother/sister. Our ministry in this city is crippled if you suddenly decide to take up Sunday morning golf...or disappear from the wider fellowship because you've found something better to do or because you got cross w/ someone at morning tea last week. (non-person) 10X in this short letter Paul uses the words, "be like-minded." Translations vary...but the Gk is always the same...It is essential for the church to remain locked heart to heart hand in hand w/ one another. Where'd Paul learn that? Jesus...3X on his last night w/ the 12 Jesus prayed that God would keep them "as one/locked heart to heart hand in hand."

*Holy Father, you have given me your name; now protect them by the power of your name so that they will be (one) united just as we are...I pray that they will all be one, just as you & I are one—as you are in me, Father, & I am in you...I have given them the glory you gave me, so they may be one as we are one. I am in them & you are in me.* – Jn 17:11, 21, 22 Why would Jesus pray so fervently for this group of misfits & slow to understand disciples when he was just hours from a torturous death & they were all about to run scared? *I pray that they will all be one, just as you & I are one...May they experience such perfect unity so that the world will know that you sent me & that you love them as much as you love me.* – Jn 17:21 & 23 Why? "**SO THAT the world will know**" the deep vast expanse of the Father's love which rescues, renews & completes his creation by Christ's life/death/rez. It is essential for the church to remain locked heart to heart hand in hand w/ one another so that the world can see love in its most pure real & tenacious form...shared poured out generous in forgiveness & restoring reconciling power. In a world where about 8 out of 10 people say, "Nah...I'd rather not live or work w/ people who are different from me," only the gospel makes enemies friends & engages them as one in pursuing the highest good for their neighbours

Keep your eye on those Yes-s...what is already yours in Jesus Christ. Keep yourselves locked heart to heart hand in hand w/ one another so the world can see the Father's love in Christ in you...

**Third...** put to death everything that distracts from the first two...*Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too...Do everything without complaining & arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked & perverse people. Hold firmly to the word of life...* Selfishness, pride, self-promotion, self-centeredness, complaining, arguing...that sense that I've got the short end of the stick...replaced by a purity & devotion & life firmly anchored in Christ & the promises of God's word. Look at Paul's list again...What's going to "fulfill his joy"? Every word is about loving each other well...about making sure you see to it someone besides you is cared for ...about working to encourage someone who needs it...putting my neighbour above my preferences...whatever gets in the way of that has to go...

**Fourth...** allow Jesus to shape his life in you...*You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.* That's actually a terrible trans...It makes it seem like you can do that on your own if you just try hard enough...Just work harder at it...harder! Bah! The Gk reads something like this: *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...* What Paul wants us to grasp is that by his dying, rising & sending the Holy Spirit to live in us...the attitude, mindset, worldview of Jesus are already in you at work in your life...Question is: are you allowing those to guide your thoughts, form your attitudes, choose your words, lead your decisions...or is your old sinful self still in charge? To *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...* is the mindset...attitude...heart's desire to see the Father's will come to fullness in the life of someone else & being prepared to do whatever it takes to see it happen.

Christ completely emptied himself of every heavenly privilege for our salvation. His mindset...attitude...heart's desire now dwells in you so you are, by the power of the Holy Spirit, being made able to imitate that same self-sacrificial love for others...that some commitment to the Father's will to see it come to pass...that same obedience that was evident in Jesus...How do I know that's true? *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* Not more effort from you, but more grace to/through you transforms you & forms in you the life of Christ that gives itself for others. **For** *God is working in you, giving you the desire & the power to do what pleases him.*

*Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender & compassionate? Then fulfil (complete) my joy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, & working together with one mind & purpose. ...*

Of course! So keep your eye on what is already yours in Jesus Christ. Encouragement, comfort, being brought together by the Spirit in mutual love tenderness & compassion is only possible among those gathered by Jesus Christ ...brought together by God coming to us personally to rescue, renew & make complete his creation by Christ's life/death/rez. Keep yourselves locked heart to heart hand in hand w/ one another so the world can see the Father's love in Christ in you. Put to death everything that distracts from the first two... whatever gets in the way of that has to go...Allow Jesus to shape his life in you. Not more effort from you, but more grace to/through you transforms you & forms in you the life of Christ that gives itself for others.

Only the good news of Jesus unites people & gives them a purposeful joy that transforms lives **AND** communities. Only the gospel makes enemies friends & engages them as one in pursuing the highest good for their neighbours...whether or not they are alike in any way. Purposeful joy is grounded in Christ & grows to fulfilment as it is poured out for others. That's the opportunity the Spirit creates for us everywhere we are, every day we live. And because that is true...

**TAKE IT HOME -** *As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...*

*God is working in you, giving you the desire & the power to do what pleases him.*

If that assurance was to be fulfilled in you this week... (giving you the "want to" & the "can do")

What would you do?

What "desire" would God give you the power to accomplish for his pleasure?

Let's pray with that in mind...

*Lord Jesus, Pour your Spirit into us and train us to be like you. Fill us with your Word and your presence and your power. Recreate us in your image so that everyone around us experiences your saving love in us. Amen*