

Ascension Lutheran Church

Pastor Godkin's Sermon for the week of March 7, 2010

The Surpassing Worth of Knowing Jesus (Philippians 3:3-14)

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen. The text for today's homily is from the thirty-third chapter of Philippians:

⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousnes from God that depends on faith— ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, ¹¹that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on because Christ Jesus has made me His own. ¹³Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward toward what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

This is the Word of God.

Dear friends in the Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ, Let's begin today with a little true or false: Because of what Jesus did for you and in the righteousness of Christ, you are declared holy and just before the throne of God. "True," you say. True or false: On the cross, your sins are forgiven, you are recovered and just before the throne of God. "True," you say. True or false: On the day of resurrection you will experience never-ending joy and peace as you stand face-to-face with your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "True," you say.

So then why does criticism bother you so much? Why do you sometimes worry about the future? Why are you sometimes so unhappy with how our life has turned out? Why—if you know all that—are you so often dissatisfied and discontent? You see, you just scored 100 percent on the pop quiz—you made an A. Yet you seem to be failing when it comes to actually living out your Christian life.

Our text for today is from the Book of Philippians. One of the major themes of that book is the power of the Gospel to make a substantial difference in your life, to give you joy and peace, no matter what. Paul writes: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice" (4:4).

Now, some of you might be thinking, "Come on, Pastor, you don't actually expect us to take that literally, do you? You don't actually expect us to believe it's possible for us to rejoice during the tough times, to rejoice during the hard times, do you?"

Well, let me answer that question with a question. What was going on in Paul's life when he wrote this letter to the Church at Philippi? What might have caused him to write such a remarkable thing? Was he on some sort of dream vacation? Had he just won the lottery?

No. Ashesays in the very first chapter of Philipp imprisoned in Rome (v13).

Paul understood too well how painful life could be. describes His life:

“Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I a greater labours, far more imprisonments, with count Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was a drift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in

You see Paul, knew just how painful life could be. there in prison about to be put on trial for his life, astonishing words: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again

Folks, I don't know about you, but it really doesn't the Lord. For example: I do not rejoice in the Lord do not rejoice in the Lord when the guy at the fast not rejoice in the Lord when I take my clothes out Kleenex in one of my pockets. I do not rejoice in because I realize I've set the alarm for 7 p.m. in

These are times when I do not rejoice in the Lord! in the Lord always. Paul was able to rejoice in the and tortured and tried. Why? Our text for today for

In just a moment I'm going to read vv 8–11 of our text your mind Paul sitting in his prison cell writing

“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things, in order that I may gain Christ and be free from all things that come from the law, but that which comes from God that depends on faith—that resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming with Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from

Do you see what gave Paul strength, what gave Paul situations? He considered everything a loss compared to knowing Christ Jesus His Lord. He considered everything a loss (filth) in order that he might gain Christ and be free

In other words, Paul was given strength, courage, hope, and joy, all because he knew Christ Jesus His Lord and he knew that he would do what he says here, the unshakable goal of his life was resurrection from the dead. Why? Because Paul knew finally he was with His Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

ians, Paul wrote this letter while he was

In Second Corinthians 11 Paul

am talking like a madman—with far less beatings, and often near death. forty lashes less one. Three times I was shipwrecked; anight and aday from rivers, danger from robbers, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, and hardship, through many sleepless cold and exposure. (2 Cor 11:23–27)”

And yet despite all of this, ashes at life, he was somehow able to write these in I will say, Rejoice.”

to take all that much for me not to rejoice in when I pay \$60 for a fill-up of gasoline. I food drive-through forgets my fries. I do of the wash and realize I left a packet of Kleenex in the car when I wake up in a panic at 7 a.m.

But Paul (unlike me) was able to rejoice in the Lord despite being repeatedly beaten in Philippians 3 gives us a clue.

Next, and as I do I want you to picture in your mind these words:

surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, so all things and count them as loss for me in order that I may gain Christ and be free from all things that come from the law, but that which comes from God that depends on faith—that resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming with Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from

hope, even in the most hopeless of situations compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus His Lord, literally in order that he might gain Christ and be free

hope, and joy, all because he knew Christ Jesus His Lord and he knew that he would do what he says here, the unshakable goal of his life was resurrection from the dead. Why? Because Paul knew finally he was with His Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ

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So, how was Paul able to rejoice in the Lord always amazing words while sitting in prison? Here is the with you today: knowing that he would one day be certain what his future would be—changed him in the those well-known words found in vv 13–14: “But one and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

You see, Paul knew that the prize was certain. Paul his. That is what gave him the confidence to keep the confidence to keep pressing on—no matter what.

Friends, what we know our future to be can actually an illustration: There were two women who were both was a terrible, awful job that nobody wanted to do. disgusting, menial work, and they wouldn't get paid men knew that at the end of the year he was going to was going to be paid \$15 million.

Now, how do you think knowing that might affect the who knew he was going to be paid only \$15,000 would probably end up quitting before the year was over. \$15 million would be happy and joyful and would come happy tune!

You see, what you know your future to be actually

My friends, Jesus Christ went to the cross to die for eternal life. Because of what Jesus did for you on covered in the righteousness of Christ, you are dec counted as just before the throne of God.

And because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, you can And on that day of resurrection, you will experience stand face-to-face with your Lord and Saviour Jesus be! That is the prize Christ has already won for us Let's have the Word strengthen us in reading our Bi blessed Word fan the flame of our faith and enliven

What does this mean for your life? How will knowing you with the words of Paul found in Phil 4:4–7:

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding minds in Christ Jesus.

Amen. The peace of the Lord be with you. Go in the

? How was he able to write these central teaching I want you to take home th Jesus in the future—knowing for present. This is what he means by thing I do: forgetting what lies behind ntoward the goal for the prize of the

knew that the prize would one day be training forward—that is what gave him

change our present. Let me give you oing to be working the same job. It Eighty hours a week. Backbreaking, until the end of the year. One of the obepaid \$15,000; the other knew he

way they viewed their work? The one be bitter and angry and would The one who knew he would be paid eto work every day whistling a

changes you in the present.

oy death and to give you the gift of the cross, your sins are forgiven, you are lared holy in your Baptism and you are

nbecertain that you, too, will rise. enever-ending joy and peace as you Christ. That is what your future will ! Let's hold on to what we already have. bleseach day. Let's have God's us for His service.

this change your life today? I leave

ce. Let your gentleness be known to out anything, but in everything by requests be made known to God. And , will guard your hearts and your

peace; serve the Lord. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria