

A Shared Peace

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[0 : 00] Let's first come to God in prayer. Sovereign and loving God, we thank you for gathering us here this morning.! As we open up your word, we ask for your peace to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Help me, Lord, as I preach your word. Give me clarity to help us pursue, experience, and practice the peace you have won for us on the cross. In Jesus' name, Amen.

What would Jesus do? Or WWJD was a very popular catchphrase in the early 2000s. The idea is simple.

To know the right thing to do, ask yourselves, what would Jesus do? But we cannot really know what Jesus would do if we do not know what Jesus did do.

And so the idea of what would Jesus do must be properly grounded in a familiarity with Scripture. If you call yourself a Christian, then you already know what Jesus did.

[1 : 09] We saw it a few weeks ago in Philippians 2, 5-11. Jesus, being in very nature God, took the very nature of a servant and humbled himself by becoming obedient to death on the cross.

Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place and was given the name above every name and every tongue confess that he is Lord. And what did Jesus accomplish on the cross?

He made peace. He ensured hostility with God has come to an end as the power of sin is broken and death is defeated. And that is the heart of the gospel.

So what would Jesus do is a helpful question, but it cannot stand on its own. If all we do is ask what would Jesus do, we risk imitating Jesus by our own strength.

By ourselves, we cannot do what Jesus did. Not his perfect obedience, not his righteousness, not his saving work. So we don't just imitate Jesus.

[2 : 18] We trust, obey, and depend on him. So maybe a better question, sorry it's not as catchy, it's not just what would Jesus do. But since Jesus has already done it, how do I live in light of that?

And that's what Paul is getting at in this passage. He's not just handing out good advice. He's telling people who already have access to God's peace, how it can become real and tangible in their lives. So as we work through the passage together, here's the question we're trying to answer. Since we worship the God of peace, how do we actually live in that peace?

From today's passage, he gives us three pointers. And here's the first point. Pursue peace through gospel-minded unity.

In verse 2, Paul begins to address a conflict between two Christians. Now we're not sure what Eodia and Syntyche are disagreeing about.

[3 : 34] Paul simply doesn't tell us in this letter. On one hand, it's not so serious that Paul doesn't scold. Yet on the other hand, not too small that he doesn't say anything.

Maybe they didn't see eye to eye on certain things. Maybe they disagreed about priorities of the church. Or they perhaps even succumbed to petty jealousy.

But it probably isn't something doctrinal. Or Paul would have addressed it directly. All we know is that Paul's main point is to ask them to be of the same mind in the Lord.

And where have we heard same mind before? Back in chapter 2, Paul has urged the church to be like-minded.

And then points them to Jesus, who humbled himself, served others, and gave his life on the cross. So to have the same mind means to agree and think like Christ.

[4 : 37] Choosing humility and sacrificial love as we look to the interests of others. Now as they read Paul's letter, wouldn't they think back and imagine all those years they have contended, side by side, for the gospel together?

The moments where they supported each other in administration, hospitality, caring for the poor, advancing gospel work together, sharing the same vision, counting each other better than themselves, all for the sake of the gospel.

It would be so different if Paul had just asked them to agree without the gospel in mind. Since Paul only addresses the two women at this stage, let me try to illustrate.

If a quarrel between two girls ever happens in our English youth ministry, which I'm a part of, which I hope and pray that they will never come, I don't think it will end well if I just ask Esther and Vicky, Why are you arguing?

Just agree with one another. I bet they will just roll their eyes at me. Now imagine for a moment, Pastor Brian trying to reconcile two deacons of this church.

[5 : 52] Just an example, Sharon and Irene. And you hear Pastor Brian saying to them, Be of the same mind in the Lord, since they have helped each other in Joy Has Dawn, Kids Club, giving to the needy in outreach programs, help each other grow in the women's group.

Now that makes a difference, doesn't it? The arguments would seem trivial as they look back at what they have done together for the gospel. Paul reminds them that they are co-workers in the gospel, and that their names are written in the book of life.

In other words, they are already united by something far deeper than personality or preference.

They are united by the gospel. And if the gospel has bound them together, there will be all the more reason to be of one mind.

So in verse 3, Paul turns to a third party, someone whom he calls a true companion, and asks them to help. We don't know exactly who this is, but that isn't quite the point.

What's striking is that Paul doesn't just tell Eudias and Syntyche to sort it out themselves. He at least someone trusted, someone who knows the situation, to come alongside them.

[7 : 17] And that's something to learn from. Wherever possible, we should seek to help two Christian parties be reconciled in church.

Now of course, that doesn't mean anyone can just appoint themselves mediator and basically be a busybody. But if you are a person with the relationships, with the trust and the knowledge of the situation, then perhaps you can be that true companion.

As Jesus said himself in Matthew 5 verse 9, it should be on the screen, Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God, not peacekeepers, peacemakers.

It's something active. So using the earlier example, Pastor Brian asking another deacon, in this case Catherine, to help mediate, as she might know, Irene and Sharon better, as well as the whole situation better.

So Paul is saying two things at once here. To Lodia and Syntyche, be reconciled. And to the rest of the church, help them get there.

[8 : 31] Because this was never me against you, it's always us for the gospel, against everything that opposes it. The reality is, we will disagree with one another.

And that's unavoidable. But if we are truly striving side by side for the gospel, then we agree on what matters most. When the gospel is the most important, unity becomes possible, and peace becomes our shared pursuit.

And when our hearts are rooted in that peace, we rejoice as we trust and depend on God to sustain it. And this brings me to my second point.

Experience peace in joyful trust and prayerful dependence. Did you notice that Paul repeats the word rejoice in verse 4?

That repetition tells us this is important. Rejoicing does not mean pretending to be happy. It is a deep, genuine joy. We naturally rejoice when our sports team wins, or when we ace an exam, for example.

[9 : 46] And that kind of joy comes easily. But Paul calls us to something deeper. A joy that flows from our relationship with the Lord.

And here's what is striking. Paul doesn't only call us to rejoice when life is good. He says, Rejoice in the Lord always.

That means even when we are weak, suffering, or facing loss. This kind of joy does not depend on circumstances, but on a deep trust in the sovereign and loving God.

It is a contentment in the Lord that remains, even in difficult times. Because true joy does not depend on circumstances, but on the presence of the Lord with us, we can have permanent joy.

Because this joy is not a continuous smile, but a satisfaction in what the Lord has done and in his presence with us. And do you remember Paul's situation?

[10:56] He's in jail. How can he rejoice in the Lord when he's suffering? Well, he's not only asking to rejoice as a command, he's showing it.

As throughout the letter, he has been rejoicing. And this is why Philippians is also known as the letter of joy. We saw that in chapter 1, verse 16, where he rejoices because the gospel is advanced. In 2, 17, he rejoices because of the faith of others. Later in 4, verse 10, we see Paul rejoicing because of the concern the Philippians have for him. And he's able to rejoice because he is content whatever his situation because of Christ.

We should hear more about this next week. But maybe some of you find it hard to rejoice in the Lord because you feel like it's just too hard.

Are there worries in your life that somehow seem to overshadow all joy and contentment in the Lord? If they are, do keep listening because Paul has a lot more to say because when we rejoice in the Lord, it changes how we treat others.

[12:12] So if inwardly people are to rejoice in the Lord, then outwardly, in verse 5, this is how others are to experience that joy.

Paul asks of the Philippians to let their gentleness be evident to all as the Lord is near. And the word all is to everyone, and that includes Christians and outsiders.

Whatever arguments within the church, as we saw earlier, must give way to gentleness towards everyone. The confronting truth is this.

Are we known to be gentle to everyone, especially outsiders? If all people experience from us is harshness, sharp words, defensiveness, or superiority, we must ask, why is gentleness not evident?

Is it something we strive for in work with our family or friends? Let me give two simple examples from my own life.

[13:21] Those that know me know I love to play basketball, and a few of you may know that I sprained my foot a few weeks back while playing. What you don't know is I have sprained it four times in total now on the same foot.

So in frustration, I threw my shoe down on the ground. No one was hurt by my actions, but they could see that I wasn't being gentle.

And it's a decision I regretted. Our reactions reveal what's in our hearts, even if it wasn't directed at them. And people notice.

Another example, at work, I have colleagues of different religions, and by God's help, I try to respond with gentleness in my words and actions. One Buddhist colleague once said I was a good Christian because of how I handled things.

He could have said a good employee instead. And that stayed with me because it reminded me that even small, consistent gentleness can reflect Christ.

[14:26] And people notice. And Jesus showed gentleness as well. Did he not? He came not as a tyrant to inspire fear or terror, but rather in gentleness.

He came as a savior using persuasion rather than force. And that same gentle savior is not distant. Notice the Lord is near in verse 5.

When we know Jesus is close and that he is coming again, it gives us security. And when we are secure in him, that peace naturally overflows towards others through gentleness.

That same security also frees us from anxiety. Because the Lord is near, Paul continues in verse 6, Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God.

Paul is not denying that we will feel anxious, but he is showing us what to do with our anxiety. Bring it to God who is near, who listens, and who cares.

[15:49] Now some of you may have been a Christian for years and still struggle with anxiety. Can I just say, that's okay. Even Paul got anxious sometimes.

Did you notice back in chapter 2, verse 28, he was desperately worried about Epaphroditus who had nearly died. And he worried about the Philippians as well, who had heard the news.

So what did he do? He did something practical, something loving. He sent Epaphroditus back to them. And in doing so, his anxiety lessened.

But what about the things we cannot do anything about? Paul says in verse 6, Present your request to God. depend on him.

Paul does not contradict himself. To put it simply, if it is within our responsibility and ability, we should act.

[16:52] But if it's not, only God can do something about it. And did you notice how Paul doesn't just say, don't be anxious? He says, but in every situation, bring it to God.

By prayer, petition, with thanksgiving. Don't just sit with anxiety, bring it somewhere. That's why he uses the word but.

He's drawing a contrast. Don't just hope for the best, but have a trusting dependence on God. And actually, even when Paul could act, like when he sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi, I'm sure he prayed first.

The ability to take action doesn't mean no prayer. So today, he's asking us a simple question. Whatever is making you anxious right now, whether it's something you can act on, something completely out of your hands.

Have you brought it to God? If not, why not do it as soon as you can? Paul knows the Philippines well.

[18:10] They are prone to anxiety. As they were reading the letter, Paul was in prison. How would that not make them anxious? Imagine if Pastor Brian were suddenly in prison.

And that's how exactly the Philippines would have felt about Paul. And that's why his words about prayer and peace are so comforting. For some of us, church matters doesn't really trouble us.

We come and we worship and we go home. Church feels like something others take care of. But that raises an important question. Are we also truly striving side by side in the gospel?

Are we sharing the same Christ-centered priorities? Now, I'm not saying we must have church matters in mind only. After all, Paul says do not be anxious about anything.

I know some of us bottle up our anxieties and some of us express them openly. But whatever our personality or coping style, do we direct it to God?

[19:18] About a month ago, I decided to share some worries with my father. I'll have to say I was very hesitant.

Part of me feared he might see me differently. Part of me wondered if he would understand or maybe simply dismiss my concerns. And honestly, it's hard to open up your deepest struggles, especially to your own father.

Where and how do I even begin? But as I shared, he listened gently and without judgment. And after I finished, he hugged me and said, we should do this more.

And that moment stayed with me. I know not everyone has this kind of relationship with their earthly father. But the good news is all of us have a heavenly father who delights in listening to us.

He sent his son, Jesus, to be near us who understands suffering, pain, and anxiety completely.

[20:29] There is nothing we face that he does not understand. If I can feel less anxious opening up to my earthly father, how much more can I bring my worries to Jesus who fully understands me and will never see me any differently.

He listens and he cares. And he invites us to bring everything to him. So make time to pray in all situations.

Jesus is inviting you to tell him more. And as you do so, rejoice as he will give you this peace which transcends all understanding to guard your hearts and minds.

peace. Because we know that Jesus had won peace for us on the cross, he has overcome the scariest thing in life, which is death. Sometimes it might be a feeling of peace, but ultimately it is that assurance.

As Jesus says in John 14 verse 27, it should be on the screen, peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

[21:40] Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. Now I can't say for sure this peace always comes immediately. Sometimes it does, sometimes it takes time.

But what fills your mind at this stage? You see, Paul doesn't just stop at verse 7. He doesn't simply say pray, experience peace, and that's the end.

He says that God's peace will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. And then in verse 8, he immediately shows us what those guarded minds should be filled with.

So in other words, when we experience peace, we have to practice it. And it's continuous and intentional by filling our minds with whatever is true and good.

And that brings me to my third point. Practice peace by thinking and living like Christ. Let's take another look at verse 8.

[22 : 46] Notice Paul uses the present continuous tense. And what's that? It's just ongoing action, not a one-time thought, but a continual pattern of thinking.

We are to think and to keep thinking about whatever is true noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy.

For the Philippians in Paul's time, it would only be the affairs of their Roman citizenship. Think the equivalent of the Winter Olympics, debating in philosophy, attending Colosseum.

But if they are citizens of heaven, as we have seen a few weeks ago, their minds ought to have a different focus. It is pretty straightforward, isn't it?

If we fill our minds with whatever is good, our responses will be good. However, it requires radical action from all of us. It is only as we fill our minds with the affairs of our heavenly citizenship that our responses will be shaped by our heavenly mindset.

[24 : 00] How often do we fill our minds with whatever is true, noble, or pure? Do we even set time aside to think about whatever is lovely, admirable, excellent, or praiseworthy?

Whatever are these examples? Look no further than Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. They have been contending for and defending the gospel, rejoicing, looking out for the interests of others, showing genuine concern for others, and taking care of needs of others.

And the reason they are able to think about all this is, again, because they have the same mind in the Lord. And what's that phrase?

Great minds think alike. In this case, gospel minds think Christ-like. Ultimately, who displays these examples the best?

There is no one who thinks more truthfully, acts more purely, loves more beautifully, or lives more admirably than Jesus.

[25 : 15] Every quality Paul lists here finds its fullest expression in him. And this can be a framework for whatever state you are in.

If you rejoice, think of such things. If you are anxious, think of such things. Let's use anxiety as an example.

Are you anxious just about everything? Think of what is true, the words of Jesus. Can any one of you, by worrying, add a single hour to your life?

are you anxious about your reputation or being criticized? Think of what is noble, his character.

Jesus stood silent before his accusers and did not panic or retaliate to protect his image.

He trusted the Father's judgment instead of man. Are you anxious about making the wrong decisions? Think of what is right, his obedience.

[26 : 21] Jesus perfectly fulfilled the Father's will. His perfect righteousness has covered all our flawed decisions. Are you anxious about your secret or sexual sins?

Think of what is pure, his undivided and single mindedness. He is ready to cleanse us if we confess it. Are you anxious about your failures?

Think of what is lovely, his compassion. Jesus did not consider equality. Peter denied Jesus three times and yet Jesus restores him. Jesus died for us while we were still sinners.

He gave us grace and showed us mercy. His love is greater than our failure. Are you anxious about not being recognized or appreciated?

Think of what is admirable, his humility. equality. Jesus did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, but humbled himself by becoming obedient to death on the cross.

[27 : 30] Are you anxious about death or the future? Think of what is excellent or praiseworthy, the cross and resurrection. The worst thing that could happen, death, has already been defeated.

As we think about such things, so our mindset will be developed in the direction of honor, justice, purity, loveliness, excellence and praiseworthiness.

But that also raises an uncomfortable question. When do we not think about such things? One very possible avenue is on the internet.

Do we think about how we serve the internet, which is flooded with misinformation, outrage, comparison and temptation?

In a world of false news, how do we separate it from truth? Do you use the internet or social media in ways that is not right, not noble, not pure, not lovely?

[28 : 37] Do we get angry at the news and silently curse it? Perhaps it's good to reflect on our online habits. Yet Paul does not just stop with thinking.

The Christian life is not just theory, but lived out. So Paul turns to action. Right thinking must also lead to right living. In verse 9, Paul reminds the Philippians that they already have a living example before them.

He says, whatever you have learned, received, heard, and seen in me, put it into practice. And this connects closely to what we have heard last week from following Paul's example, that we are not meant to run the Christian race alone, but to run with mature, godly examples.

Paul is saying the same thing here. Don't just admire, imitate, practice it. For as we obey, by imitating godly lives, when we trust and depend on Jesus for the ability to do so, our lives begin to reflect God's peace more and more.

Ultimately, this is not merely about better thoughts or better habits, it is about a transformed life, a life shaped by the peace of God guarding our hearts and minds as we live it out each day.

[30 : 09] As we end, let us continue to worship the God of peace by pursuing peace through gospel-minded unity, experience peace in joyful trust and prayerful dependence on God, and practice peace by thinking and living like Christ.

Let's pray. thank you Lord Jesus for your word. May we pursue gospel-minded unity, to joyfully trust and prayerfully depend on you and to practice Christ-like living.

Help us rejoice in you, not just now, but always. We thank you for being near us and let our gentleness be evident to all. We cast our anxieties to you, knowing that the peace transcends all understanding to continue to guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

We confess, Lord, that we do not always think about whatever is true, lovely, or praiseworthy.

Forgive us and we pray you renew our minds with whatever is right, pure, and excellent.

We pray and ask all this in the name of Jesus. Amen.