**Peace in the Time of Storm**

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*Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.* ***2*** *I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.* ***3*** *Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.* ***4*** *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.* ***5*** *Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.* ***6*** *Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* ***7*** *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* ***8*** *Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* ***9*** *Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you"* (Philippians 4:1-9).

## 1. Divided Country

The 2020 Presidential Election is top of mind for many Americans. As we draw closer to the election, tensions rise between the nominees, political parties, and their supporters. Our political system makes voting an either-or decision. While we live in the same country, the many differences between people can make it seem like we are living in two different worlds.

When you read the news or listen to commentary, it can seem like we are divided in two: Democrat or Republican, liberal or conservative. Many worry that the country has become increasingly divided over time. Last week, there was news of a potential attempt to kidnap a governor and overthrow the state government in Michigan. This is one example of some of the division that is part of our current state.

What about Christianity and the church? Are we any different? There are conservative and liberal Christians who have different understandings and views on everything including the interpretation of the Bible. Christians at both ends of the spectrum may look at breaking away from other Christians or creating new denominations to group with other like-minded Christians. We seem to be living in the storm. There is no peace anywhere in the world.

**2. Philippian Church**

The Philippian church in the first century was not so different from what we see today. The Philippian church was the first church Paul planted in Europe. Philippians chapter four tells us how much Paul cared, was concerned for and loved the congregation. In Philippians 4:1, Paul calls them "***my brothers and sisters***" whom he loves and longs for." Paul calls the Philippians "his joy, crown, and beloved."

Yet in verse 2, Paul says, "***I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.*** [3] ***Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life."***

Paul pleads with two women, Euodia and Syntyche, to agree with each other in the Lord. Paul does not tell us the exact nature of their conflict. They likely had different views or positions. In spite of their differences, Paul encourages them "***to be of the same mind in the Lord***." What does Paul mean by this? Paul is telling Euodia and Syntyche that they should concentrate on what they have in common, being called to the same mission and purpose to share the gospel of Jesus with others.

**3. Rejoice in the Lord**

In verse 4, Paul says, "***Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice."*** What does he mean by "rejoice in the Lord"? The term rejoice does not mean a happiness dependent on the circumstances. But instead, it means a deep contentment that is rooted in the Lord. This is based on a trust in the constant love of God, especially in difficult times.

The Greek word used is *chairete*. This is a plural imperative verb. What this means is that Paul is referring to not an individual rejoicing, but a collective rejoicing. This is a feeling of gladness together with someone else.

The idea of "rejoicing" is related to the issue between Euodia and Syntyche. Paul reminds the two women and the church that they are fellow workers in the gospel of Jesus. Although they may not be personally happy all the time, Paul calls the church to remain in communal joyfulness while embracing their differences. Euodia and Syntyche might disagree on the issues, however, they are called to work together for the common good.

**4. Friendship between Ginsburg and Scalia**

Ann talked about this a few Sunday's ago, but I wanted to highlight again the relationship of two Supreme Court justices, Ruth Bader Ginsburg

and Antonin Scalia. Their friendship was very unlikely. Ginsburg was a woman and Jewish. Scalia was Catholic and Italian American.

They had different views and backgrounds and were known to have strong dissents. They didn't change their votes to please the other. Yet the very conservative Scalia and liberal Ginsburg had a genuine friendship. The two families would get together for New Year's. They took vacations together and shared a love of food, travel, the opera, and law.

We see in their friendship, the ability to have different convictions that don't undermine a sincere relationship. Although they argued with one another, Justices Ginsburg and Scalia remained good friends in their many years on the Supreme Court together.

**5. Conclusion**

Conflict has become an everyday part of life these days. Peace, even for Christians, can often seem difficult to find. How are we able to find peace in a time like this?

The Philippian Church had the same conflict during their time. Paul's co-workers Euodia and Syntyche were on opposite sides. Yet Paul reminded the church to encourage one another and to embrace their togetherness as people called to the same mission and gospel of Jesus. Paul urges the church to pray in all situations and to search for the peace that only God can give us.

**6. Application**

What are we concerned about? Are we concerned about the future of the country, the UMC, our church, or maybe our family? What can we do to solve all these problems? Paul suggests that we rejoice in the Lord and that we give our thanks to God for being called to him and allow God to take care of the rest.

Paul says, "***Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*** [7] ***And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***"

There will always be something to worry about in our lives. However, our worries alone don't make much of a difference in this world. Paul tells us to remember to trust in God's ability to overcome and solve any kind of issue and to be grateful for God's peace that surpasses all our understanding.

Christine and I enjoy seeing our grandson on video calls. Caleb isn't aware of what is happening in the world. He doesn't worry about COVID-19 or the presidential election. He simply wakes up, eats, and sleeps.

Babies remind us that children entrust their lives into the hands of their loving parents. In the same way, each of us can entrust our lives into the hands of God. We don't need to worry, even in difficult situations. God is our creator, sustainer, and redeemer. God's wisdom and his sovereignty rules over all creation. God loves us no matter what and gives us the strength to stay connected and at peace, always. Amen.