

February 9, 2020

Finding Peace in a Troubled World

"The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives of true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice...For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain...Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

Philippians 1:18-27

Our world is a troubled place isn't it? In my lifetime I have seen many things change and many challenges arise. Some have been for the better; others not so much. But in all my years I don't really think this world has ever been at peace for very long, if at all.

And yet, for those of us who wear the name of Jesus finding peace and yes, even joy, in this troubled world is more than just a possibility. It can be our reality. But, be honest, how many of us have discovered either peace or joy in our day-to-day existence? I would dare say not one of us has found lasting peace or overwhelming joy.

So, if God promises us peace and joy, why are we not living in either? What have we missed? The Apostle Paul, in writing this letter to the church at Philippi, is calling believers to both. Through this letter he will, I believe, show us the way.

The Apostle will, I think, show us at least five important steps to finding immediate lasting peace and joy in our lives. Over the next few weeks we will be considering these steps to a more joyful and a more peaceful existence in a world that is seldom filled with either.

Step One: Find your focus. Most of us are seldom if ever really focused. We live our lives like a pinball banging off objects and sidewalls, colliding with obstacles and being smacked by heavy blows. We literally bounce from thing to thing, from interest to interest, from task to task, from electronic device to electronic device. Everything we see or hear or feel effects us in major ways; usually not for the best. We lack clear focus and it shows.

So, how do we find focus? I am convinced that there are a number of things we can do to help clarify our focus. First, we need to shrink our existence down to its reality. In reality we exist in a very small world. I'm not talking about the whole earth. I am talking about the small part of the world where our lives are really being lived. For most of us here today our world is wrapped up in Southwest Montana. We live here, we work here, we play here, we worship here. Our lives may be pulled away from this small world by our work or our interests or our families, but for the most part our world is right here in Southwest Montana.

Second, I believe we must come to understand that our Creator and God has placed us here in Southwest Montana to do his work. What is his work? Jesus said his work was to serve others rather than to be served and to seek and save those who are lost. So what is our purpose in our world. Jesus would teach us that our purpose is to serve and through our service to bring others to his salvation.

So, in our work, in our play, and in our lives in this small piece of the world, we need to focus on fulfilling the purpose that our God and Father had and has for putting us here. There are, in truth, way too many distractions to this simple reality. We are so easily distracted by things that are happening miles and miles from us, things that have happened years and years in the past, and things that might happen years and years in the future.

I am convinced that Paul found joy in the reality of his sharp, clear, focused life. He has focused his existence on preaching the gospel. He is in prison in Rome because he has continually

preaches the gospel. Others are preaching the gospel in a vain effort to hurt him and he tells us, ***"The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice."***

Paul lives to preach the gospel and finds joy when ever and how ever that gospel is preached. Would that you and I could find such a clear, concise focus for our lives. So, step one in finding joy and peace in this troubled world is to find our focus.

