

Serve Christ with Joy and Gladness

Worship Guide & Gospel Meditation

AS WE GATHER

Jesus Christ humbled Himself, taking on the form of a servant in order to serve you by living a perfect life and taking your sin to the cross. He is now glorified in heaven above every name. The Father in heaven now calls you to serve Christ and others with that same humility with a joyful and grateful heart knowing that He has forgiven you and called you to serve in His name. Amen.

HOLY SCRIPTURE LESSONS

Ezekiel 18:1–4, 25–32

(Personal Responsibility & Call to Repentance)

The word of the Lord came to me: "What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, declares the Lord God, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul who sins shall die.

"Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? When a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it; for the injustice that he has done he shall die. Again, when a wicked person turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he shall save his life. Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions that he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die.

"Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord God; so turn, and live."

Philippians 2:1–18

(Imitating Christ's Humility & Service)

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life... I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

"What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not,' but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him."

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Saint Paul instructed the church at Philippi:

"So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others."
(Philippians 2:1–4)

The church at Philippi was generous in its support of Paul's ministry, but it had problems. Some members looked down on other sinners; others thought of themselves first (*"What am I getting out of this?"*); still others questioned God's fairness.

The Christian should have an attitude of humility and joy. Humility comes from hearing the Law that God judges sinners and the Gospel that because of Christ, those trusting in Him are set free from punishment and promised paradise. Joy comes from the knowledge that God is in control, not us. He works good even out of bad situations. Even in the midst of our suffering in the world, He has won the victory over sin, death, and the devil and holds us safely in His arms. The Christian has confidence in Christ—that He accomplishes mighty deeds—not fear of the world and the devil. Unfortunately, our sinful natures develop pride and selfishness that destroy fellowship and joy. We put ourselves above others, grumble about our rights, and complain about how unfair God is to us and overly generous to others. Yet, God's Word calls us to think of others as more important than ourselves. As we meditate on and accept God's mercy to us in the cross of Christ, we realize how God has set us free from sin to serve, love, and forgive others in His name.

Christians are to have the same mind of Christ. He is God, but humbled Himself to take on human flesh. He lived the perfect life that we could not live. He took the sins that would have condemned us to hell eternally onto His back. He paid for our sins through His death on the cross.

"Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9–11)

He endured your cross and shame for the joy of giving you His saving righteousness and enabling you to serve others in His name. He calls you into a joyful fellowship with all believers and to serve and worship Him with gratitude in your heart. Amen.

Pastor Raymond Van Buskirk

SUMMARY & REVIEW WORKSHEET

Saint Paul reminded the church at Philippi of the blessings of being in Christ, including _____, _____, _____, and _____.

They will complete his joy by being of one _____ in Christ.

Some of their problems included _____, _____, and _____.

Christ did not come to earth with an attitude of _____ and self-_____. Instead, He _____ Himself taking on the form of a _____.

Likewise, we should drop vain rivalries, dissensions, grumbling, and complaining, and have _____ and a sense of _____ in our hearts serving others in His name.

STUDY QUESTIONS (READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1–18)

1. Which of the blessings of being in Christ means the most to you? Why? (v. 1)
2. What is Saint Paul's objective in having Philippi exemplify Christ's love? (v. 2)
3. What attitudes should we not have? (vs. 3–4)
4. What attitudes should we have? (vs. 5–6)
5. Of what Christ did for you, what is the most surprising, and why? (vs. 6–11)
6. Why do we "work out our salvation with fear and trembling"? Who is in your heart? (vs. 12–13)
7. As we work for Christ, what should we remember about how to act? (vs. 14–16)
8. What should the fellowship between Saint Paul and the church at Philippi result in? (vs. 17–18)

CLOSING PRAYER

"Precious Lord Jesus, You thought of me first, enduring the cross for the joy of saving me. Work through Your Spirit in my heart to conform me to Your mind and heart in loving others and serving them in all humility, putting the needs of others first and enjoying Christian fellowship with gratitude to You for Your mercy and grace given to me. Amen."