



60A PENTECOST 19A - BIBLE STUDY

Peace of mind

Abstract

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!
Philippians 4:4

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Peace of mind

Sunday, October 11, 2020 | After Pentecost | Proper 23 | Year A

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Exodus 32:1–14

Psalm Psalm 106:1–6, 19–23

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Isaiah 25:1–9

Psalm Psalm 23

New Testament Philippians 4:1–9

Gospel Matthew 22:1–14

Philippians 4.1-9

As Paul signs off his letter, he urges the community to support two women named as co-workers, and to be always rejoicing, praying, pursuing whatever is honourable, pure and praiseworthy, and – he says – the peace of God will be with them.

This week's resources explore: how the Philippians were prepared for life without Paul.

Welcome and opening prayer

A prayer of approach

Lord God, we never know what the future holds or where life will take us next.

We never know what is just around the corner and what the outcomes of things will be.

But we know that whatever follows on from this moment, you are here with us, by our side, above and beneath us, entwining your life with ours, surpassing all human understanding.

In this moment, bless us and awaken us to your abiding presence.

Amen.

Reading

Philippians 4:1–9

4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

² I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³ Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

respond

For the word of the Lord **Thanks be to God**

Exegesis

Philippians 4.1-9

Paul prepares to sign off his letter. Writing from prison, we are not sure where Paul is or his exact circumstances (in Caesarea in the late AD 50s or Rome in the early 60s), but it is possible that he knew that the Philippians would not see or hear from him again.

Two women – Euodia and Syntyche (pronounced Sun-tu-ké) – are named as co-workers. We know nothing about these two women other than that an issue had arisen between them. However, it is an indication that, despite the best efforts of the Church to marginalise the contribution of women for many centuries, women were active in the ministry of the Early Church. We also know nothing about the issue. But we can see how Paul urges Syzygus – the word or name translated as ‘loyal companion’ – to help them sort out the problem. Perhaps he is making a pun, urging his friend to live up to his name!

The verses that follow suggest a way of being and behaving designed to minimise such quarrels. In a sense, they are a spiritual exercise, designed to focus the mind in ways that drive out bad thoughts and create positive feelings towards others. Don’t stoke up your anxiety; pray about things instead. Let your mind think about good, beautiful, honourable things. God’s peace will then come to you, to guard your hearts and minds in Christ. Note that ‘heart’ in the ancient world was the centre of the will (the stomach was the centre of the emotions), so the peace of God is not there to make you feel better but to help you do the right things.

Picture Pointers

- When was the last time you wrote a letter to someone?
- When have you said goodbye to someone, for a long time?
- What kind of reassurance gives you peace of mind?



Live your faith

Each day this week, write a note of encouragement and place it where someone else will find it – at home, school, work, or somewhere else suitable

A sending out prayer

We go our separate ways, Lord – perhaps with smiles or frowns; with our hopes and with fears; with answers but also questions; maybe crying and with heavy hearts; or with anxieties, or relief. We go our separate ways, Lord, but we never go alone. With thankful hearts, we share the journey of life with each other and with you. Be with us as we go. Amen