

THE WORD FOR TODAY

PHILIPPIANS 4, 4-9: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”



Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter to the Christians at Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia, Northern Greece. Paul had founded the church there. The Philippians had been generous to Paul and he was writing to thank them and to encourage them in their faith. They were always in fear of persecution and were surrounded by all sorts of temptations from pagan practices.

Paul tells them there is joy and peace to be found in their Lord and God in any circumstances. Paul himself was “locked down” and his words speak to us in this seemingly endless pandemic.

Follow the words of this short Bible passage on seven panels around the church. The first is just round the corner on the north wall of this little building and the others are on the east wall of the church (right as you look from here) for panels 2, 3 & 4, and on the west wall (5, 6 and 7). The translation of the Bible used is the New International Version, and you can look it up on the internet under Bible Gateway.

**“Rejoice in the Lord always.
I will say it again: Rejoice!”**

1



In last year's lockdown, and in this one, it's good to count your blessings. Where is joy to be found? In skies, in views, in people, in health? All of these things certainly.

For me, my faith comes at the top of the list. I know why Paul could rejoice in the Lord, even in prison. To know that God loves me unconditionally through every day, however trying that day may be—to know that God has a future for me—to know that God is the God who sets me free from whatever weighs me down—is enough to make my heart sing.

***Lord, help me to rejoice in you, even in the bad times.
Help me to rest in the assurance your love brings.***

Now walk to the right of the church building to find panels 2, 3 and 4



THE WORD FOR TODAY

**“Let your gentleness be evident to all.
The Lord is near.”**

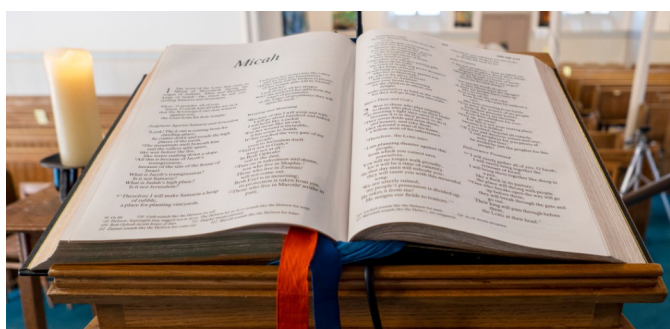
2



When we're all a bit anxious and unsure about where things are going, it's easy to be concentrating so hard on ourselves that we forget others. I think Paul is reminding us here that everybody around us should be able to see that we care. That we have the same consideration for others as Jesus had. Jesus was very good at noticing others' needs—even a woman who touched his clothes in a crowd.

There are a lot of people needing support right now. Are you the sort of person people would be willing to turn to, or to confide in? Would they appreciate your prayers? We have the opportunity to share God's love. Ask yourself “What would Jesus do?”, or better still ask Jesus directly because he is right beside you.

***Lord, help me to be the sort of person you want me to be.
Pull down the barriers I put up between me and the world.
Help me to show the empathy Jesus had with people.***



THE WORD FOR TODAY

**“Do not be anxious about anything,
but in everything, by prayer and
petition, with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God.”**

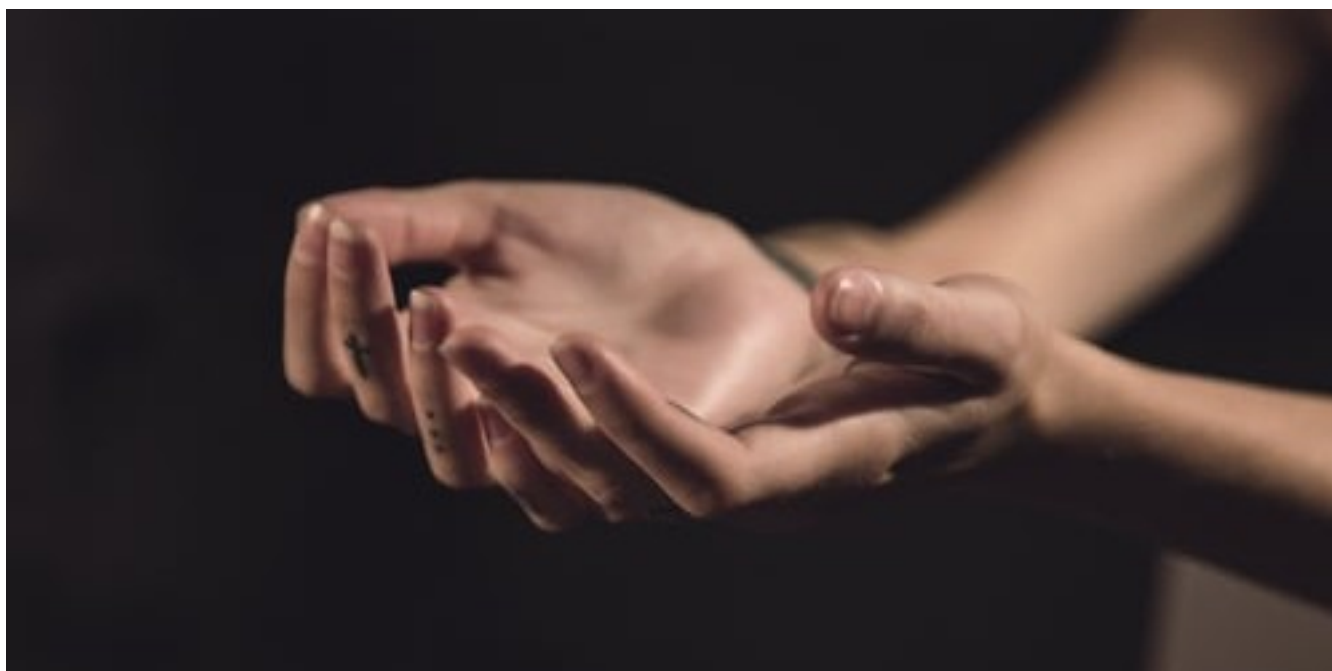
3

Is there anyone who can honestly say that they haven't had any anxieties through this pandemic? Worries about health, money, jobs, loneliness, family have escalated. Perhaps we deny it because we don't want to appear weak.

What is weighing you down today? God knows how you feel and you can admit it to him. We can take all our burden of worries to him and ask him to lift that load from us. We can pray for help going forward—we can pray for solutions. He is always there, and will always listen.

. . . . and as parents always remind their children: “Don't forget to say thank you”!

***Lord, thank you for being there and being ready to listen.
Please take the burden of anxiety from me
and guide me onward.***



THE WORD FOR TODAY

**“And the peace of God,
which transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds
in Christ Jesus.”**

4

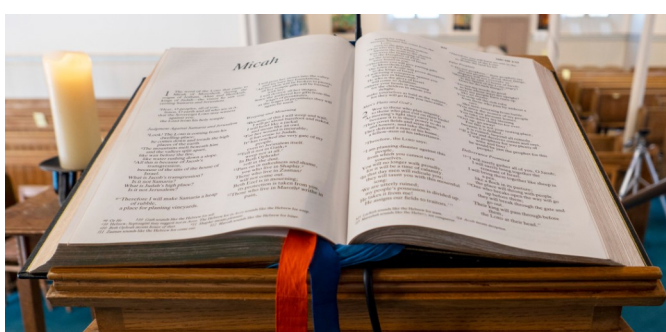
When we place our trust in God and hand over our worries to him, that's when we know his peace. It surrounds us like a warm hug from someone we love (and these are in short supply these days!).

As we continue to trust in God, that peace will be there to help us to stay positive, to still any flutters of anxiety that arise, to keep us calm.

***Lord, thank you for the stillness in my soul.
Keep me close to you so that your peace and calm stay with me.***



Now walk along the back of the church and turn left to find panels 5, 6 and 7



THE WORD FOR TODAY

**“Finally, brothers, 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.”**

5

I think Paul might say if he was writing today: “Get your head in the right place”!

Paul was writing to people surrounded by temptations to opt out of the Christian life (and therefore avoid persecution) with plenty of alternatives on offer. We have different temptations—the barrage of news about the pandemic can tempt us to be over-critical, to hit out against restrictions, to feel sorry for ourselves and to get depressed. We too need to “get our heads in the right place”.

I learned as long ago as last April that one full news bulletin a day was more than enough for my well-being. For the rest of the time, I try to keep positive and outward-looking. I keep in touch with God, directly, through his church at Liberton, and in his beautiful creation. I choose radio and television carefully. I keep in touch with people I care about and try to lift spirits if needed. I help others where I am able. What are you doing to make sure “your head is in the right place”?



***Lord, keep my mind focussed on good things.
Let me not be tempted to sink into self-absorption and negativity.
Help me to support those who are really struggling with life.***



THE WORD FOR TODAY

“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice.”

6

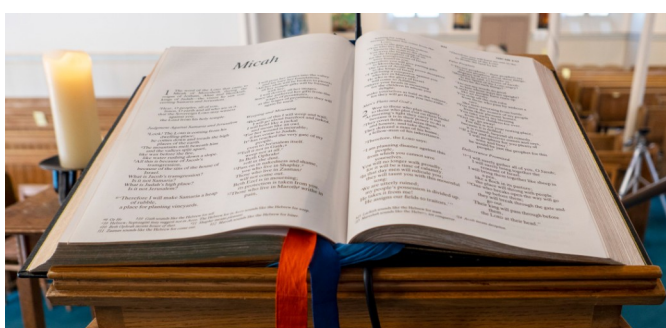
Christianity is all about love. Jesus said that the two most important things in our lives should be to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. However much we read from the Bible or hear from church teaching, however much we talk about our faith with our friends, it's no good unless it guides the way we live our lives.

Jesus told the story of the good Samaritan (Luke 10, 25-37) to illustrate his teaching about loving your neighbour. He finished with “Go and do likewise”. We've got to live out our faith in the world.

***Lord, keep me close to you and deepen my faith.
Teach me how to live a life of love in a world which needs it.***



Panel no. 7 is on the church wall behind the cairn on the right



THE WORD FOR TODAY

**“And the God of peace
will be with you.”**

7

What a promise! An ever-present companion along the road through this strange time of disturbing news and dubious political promises. Someone we can trust. A companion who brings calm and stillness and certainty.

*Lord, thank you for
being with me.*

*Thank you for the peace
you bring to my life.*

*Make me a channel of that
peace to others around me.*



If you find it difficult to believe this promise is for you, or to believe in the God you've been reading about—or if you would just like to know more—come to our on-line Alpha Course (open to anybody). Contact John Young, by telephone on 664 3067 or by email on JYoung@churchofscotland.org.uk for access details or for any more information you would like.



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