

**“The Secret of Being Content” (Philippians 4:10-13)**

For Your Life in Christ This Thanksgiving Eve, November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2011

Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church of Irvine, CA (LC-MS)

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**Introduction: The Christian Life is a Joyful Life!**

- A. In our Epistle tonight, the Holy Spirit through St. Paul presents how our faith in Christ is expressed:

**Philippians 3:1: “Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.”**

**Philippians 4:4: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.”**

- B. The fact that we may suffer in life does not change our call to also know the greatest and truest joy in the Lord Jesus Christ! We are not called to be gloomy (even though we struggle against the flesh, the world, and the devil).
- C. This joy is what leads us to experience thanksgiving in our lives. We know the true joy and do not need to rely on cheap substitutes. Notice the contrast described in the Word:

**Ephesians 5:18-20: “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

- D. Thanksgiving is the result of rejoicing in the Lord!
- E. Look closely at our text now: St. Paul is not focused on the gift, but what is **behind the gift**.

**Philippians 4:10-11: “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.”**

- F. On the occasion of having received a gift, St. Paul rejoiced **“in the Lord greatly.”**

**Part I: But our Sinful Nature is Blind to Real Thanksgiving**

- A. According to our sinful nature, we never look to what is **behind** the gift. Instead, we look **at the gift itself**.
- B. By doing this, we are robbed of thanksgiving, because all other gifts outside of Christ fade away:
1. Notice how children often treat gifts.
  2. All of our gifts fall short:
    - a. Our spouses seem inadequate when we view them apart from Christ.
    - b. Our income is inadequate when we forget the Lord’s promises.
    - c. Our vocations are inadequate when we forget that Christ is working through us.
    - d. Our homes, cars, and clothing are never new enough when we are not content in the Lord.
- C. Stare at the gift and this is the surest way of losing all contentment, joy and thanksgiving! If joy is robbed, so much for thanksgiving!
- D. Instead, we are called to return to Christ!
- Luke 17:15-16: “Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice; and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks.”**

**Part II: We are Called to Behold Different Gift, a Secret One (Phil 4:12)**

- A. That is there is an exception to the rule about not looking at the gift. There is ONE we should gaze at constantly and those things that pertain to His salvation for us!
- 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:12: “Even angels long to look into these things.”**
- B. St. Paul spoke of a “secret.”
1. Something which the Lord must reveal to us. Without His revelation, we would never know the secret in a million years.
  2. And this only happens as we are taught by the Lord where to look; where the secret is revealed. Namely through the Word and Sacraments of Jesus Christ!

3. Once this happens, we learn the wondrous truth:

**Philippians 4:12-13:** *"I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."*

- C. Talk about something to be thankful for! Imagine that: regardless of our earthly situation, there is a way to be content *"in any and every circumstance"* and that secret is *"through him."*

#### **Conclusion: Not Just Words**

- A. In Christ, everything else becomes a source of thanksgiving because we see that these gifts are from the Lord!

**1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:4-5:** *"For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer."*

1. In Christ, we can be thankful for our families.
  2. In Christ, we can be thankful for our income.
  3. In Christ, we can be thankful for our vocations.
  4. In Christ, we can be thankful for our possessions.
- B. All good things now point to Christ, the One behind the gifts.
  - C. And in seeing Him, we see the even greater gifts to be thankful for in the Gospel that...
    1. Jesus lived for us.
    2. Jesus died for us.
    3. Jesus rose for us.

4. And that through Word and Sacrament we are joined to Christ.
5. And in being joined to Christ we have received the Holy Spirit.
6. And that through the Holy Spirit we are led to the theme of this season: thanksgiving.
  - a. The Holy Spirit makes us thankful that our sins are washed away.
  - b. The Holy Spirit makes us thankful that we have received eternal life.
  - c. The Holy Spirit makes us thankful that we are children and heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Rm 8:17).
  - d. Therefore we may also be thankful that we have nothing to fear for the Father has been pleased to give us the kingdom (Lk 12:32).
  - e. So that not only are you promised earthly provision (Mt 6:25-33), but consider even more:

**1<sup>st</sup> Peter 1:3-9:** *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith – more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls."*

- D. Yes, in Christ, we have very, very much to be thankful for!