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PRESIDENT'S LETTER - NOVEMBER 07

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:4-7)

The Apostle Paul writes this letter of joy from the depths of a Roman prison. He knew that in his chains he was facing death. Yet his letter to the Christians in Philippi resounds with joyful thanksgiving. Paul makes his requests to God for his flock “with joy” (Phil. 1:4). We also need to make our requests known to God “with thanksgiving” (Phil 4:6).

Sometimes the ministry gets us down. We are burdened with our own personal problems. On top of that, our members’ problems weigh down our hearts and minds. Filled with self-pity, we tend to see the negative in everything we are doing, or we lose patience with people in their needs. One attack by a disgruntled member or a fellow pastor blinds us to all the blessings of God around us. When the future seems bleak, we may retreat into our own little world and give up on God and our ministry. This can especially afflict us as we get older.

The letter to the Philippians gives us God’s antidote to our anxiety, “Rejoice in the Lord!” Or as Paul concludes his letter, “Rejoice in the Lord **always!**” We sometimes make the mistake of rejoicing only when things are going our way. This kind of joy is superficial and fleeting. God’s joy in Christ is lasting and eternal. God’s love for us has been revealed in Jesus Christ. We need to fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. When asked how we know that all things work together for our good in the face of all of these things, the Holy Spirit tells us to look to Jesus and the cross. “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things” (Romans 8:32)?

“Again I will say, rejoice!” Go through the day making mental notes of the reasons you find to give thanks to God. Begin with Jesus. Continue with your family. Go outside and look at the wonders of God’s creation. Consider the faith and love of your members which have flourished. Dwell on the promises God makes to you in His sure Word. Remember, “The Lord is at hand.”

Joy moves us in every situation of life to let our requests be made known to God with thanksgiving. Our prayer life begins with thanking God for everything He has done for us in Christ. Thanksgiving enables us to enjoy our lives even in the midst of the sufferings of this present age. Thanksgiving drives out worry from our problem filled existence. Too often our prayer life consists of desperate pleas for help as we lay out for God what He should do for us. We need to learn to pray from a posture of grateful thanks to God. When we pray with thanksgiving, we turn our needs over to our heavenly Father.

The future is always filled with anxiety when we think that the future is up to us. Pastors are especially vulnerable to think that everything depends upon them. We tend to think that the future of our congregations and the lives of our people are under our control. The most difficult thing is to be anxious for nothing. Thanksgiving drives out anxiety and worry. Take your requests to God realizing what He has done for you.

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice!”

When you let your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving, God responds giving you peace of heart and mind and spirit. This peace is the opposite of anxiety. This is not the peace the world gives - the peace of financial stability, the peace of perfect health, the peace of “success” in the ministry. This is the peace of God in the Prince of Peace. This peace of God surpasses anything the world can offer. This peace of God will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

May you in your ministries and family life rejoice in the Lord in every circumstance of life. Let your requests be made know to God with thanksgiving. Oh, give thanks unto the Lord for He is good for His mercy endures forever.

With thanksgiving for all of you in your ministries,



John Schierenbeck

Remember in your prayers:

Pastor Jim Naumann fell down a flight of steps and broke both his leg and ankle. The ankle was a severe break, requiring a plate and several screws. The surgery was completed successfully on October 30, in North Platte NE.

Pastor Ed Starkey underwent surgery this week to remove his gall bladder. So far it appears that he will receive sufficient financial assistance locally, so that there won't be a hardship.

I send out a synod-wide appeal for financial help only after the family and local congregations respond to the need as they are able based on the needs. Even though there is no direct appeal for financial help, I would encourage you to respond financially to help with the extra expenses for these two families.

Pastor Mike Schierenbeck is considering a bone marrow transplant in January. There will be more information after he meets with his doctor in November.