**Phil 4:4-13 (ESV)**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. **5** Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; **6**  do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. **8** Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. **9** What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. **10** 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. **11** Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. **12** 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. **13** I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

**“What God Makes Known”**

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. It is amazing how much a person can know today just by signing on to the internet. Living in the “information age” puts one answer after another right at our fingertips. If knowledge is power then the skies the limit in the present age. This is what makes celebrating the 200th anniversary of C.F.W. Walther still relevant. Why did those Saxon Lutherans leave Germany? What pushed young pastor Walther to the edge of immigrating to America? Outside of a forced union between Reformed and Lutheran churches, another issue was man’s reason getting out of control. No longer was there satisfaction or solace found in God’s Word. During this period of rationalism in Europe, central doctrines of Christianity were removed. Even preaching bent to the changing culture. “Sermons became mere discourses on current events, science, careless bathing, and the necessity of planting trees” (Servant of the Word 43). Can this happen again in our information age? Can reason replace any redeeming Word from Christ? Here is the key. What God makes known by the Gospel is to save us from what we do know as sinners.

When St. Paul wrote to the Philippians church, he was in prison. The doors were shut for anymore mission work. This great apostle to the Gentiles could do nothing. All of it deeply affected the Philippian congregation who shared in supporting His ministry. They knew how the Roman system of justice played out and it was not pretty. Already knowing their attitude would be one of gloom and doom. St. Paul proclaims at the end of His letter, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone.” There was only one Lord and it was not Paul. The command to rejoice was not over what made them happy, but how God remained God. His Will and Word were unharmed. God would still have His way with sinful men. Everyone would know about Paul’s imprisonment, but not everyone in Philippi knew those baptized into Christ could rejoice in the Lord at all times. They did not have to take matters into their own hands like others. True joy was in a firm and patient trust in the saving work of God.

Since we live in a society of instant gratification, joy comes and goes. Having to fuel this hunger can be expensive, time-consuming, and be a drain on others. In many respects, this is what drives the market and makes business in the world. Yet, no amount of materialism and glorified life will keep any sinner satisfied. It is like those in the parable who were too busy to come to the feast because of what they were making of their lives. Rev. President Matt Harrison states, “Here’s the secret: if we seek joy for its own sake, we will not find it. If we seek Jesus, we shall be engulfed and inundated by joy, and quite by surprise” (A Little Book On Joy 9). The command from St. Paul to rejoice comes from the fact that God seeks after us. Christianity is far from gloomy because the Father has sent His Son. Rather than joy being in us, it is in the Lord, in Jesus, in His Word. He is the celebration of His Church. God has already prepared a reason to rejoice far exceeding what we can measure, count, or achieve. It is firm and patient trust standing upon the undying love of God’s Son. What God makes known is to save us from what we do know of despair and loss.

Outside of his imprisonment, St. Paul recognized the fears running through the Philippian church. If this happened to the mighty apostle what might happen to them? Where there is worry people are always looking for a way out. It would have been tempting to go after the token god of the city. Silvanus, the god of agriculture and the countryside, was both popular and a source of income for the small town of Philippi. St. Paul calmed these fears by turning all concerns back to Christ. He said, “The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Instead of answering the solution in a sinful way, Christ remained Savior. They could call upon the Father by the promise of baptism into His Son. Being able to lay their fears before God was reason enough to give thanks. Rather than a last ditch effort of desperation, prayer was the first way to deal with all worries caused by sin, death and the Devil.

With the amount of knowledge accumulated today, it is not surprising we worry about so much. Who could calculate or balance all that could happen? Who can control the course of their life let alone the world? There is plenty to fear, but sinners without the Savior only drive a wedge between God and man. In other words, by nature we find ways to excuse away sins, want to use science to deny the existence of God, and have little patience for prayer when figuring out problems. We forget these words from St. Paul, “The Lord is at hand.” Better translation “The Lord is near.” Near how? Because God became man, Jesus lived this life of fear knowing sin, death and the Devil had no power over Him. He prayed in the garden to His Father knowing His work on the cross was the answer to all prayers. In the face of worry, Jesus leads the baptized to the knowledge of praying in His Name. Here is the promise, “But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt 6:33). What God makes known by Word and Sacrament is to save us from what we do know of fears to always pray, “Our Father.”

As Paul sat in prison, he knew the Philippians were in a safe place. Laying on the outskirt of Rome, their town was highly fortified for defense. A garrison was built there to protect a strategic passage from foreign invasion. It was a peace being managed by the hands of men. Such things would not last forever in a sinful world. Works no matter how secure still fall short before the Law. St. Paul proclaimed the true refuge for these Christian, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” The Roman soldiers were mighty defenders, but God guards against all the forces of darkness that stands against sinners. St. Paul especially knew such a Lord of salvation. Christ defended His church saying to this former-enemy of the Gospel, “Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?” Likewise, the same Savior later shook the cell doors open for Paul and Silas while imprisoned right there in Philippi! The baptized could trust God was on their side working by the promise made in Jesus.

Security is what we talk a lot about in our country. It seems to cover every area of life from dealing with terrorism to insurance plans. What happens if that is all we trust for protection? Is it possible that the more we know about security the less we will feel secure? Peace in this life will always be temporary and questionable. Only Christ offers the baptized true protection by His Name. It is to have “garments of salvation” where God guards sinners by what He gives as a promise. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you (John 14:27). Man by nature can only hope in the Law, in works, in reason. Sinners will never know enough, do enough, or have enough rules to feel secure. In order to have peace, reason might even lead us to shut out God’s Word, deny Christ as Savior, and turn freedom into slavery. Just as it was trying to do is the time of Walther. God answers all insecurities with the sacrifice of His Son. This peace is for a world so set on security that we went so far to condemn Jesus on the cross. However, where works, law, and reason failed to give a lasting peace. The Savior secures a deeper love for us to trust in Him. What God makes known is to save us from what we do know as sinners. Amen. Now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting, Amen.