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Upper Thames Missionary Church
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Philippians 4:10-23
"Blossom Again"

Fellowship is great, but remember:- are you gathering with the church to Worship the Creator God of the Universe?

That's why we are gathered together.

If we gather for each other then we inevitably get caught up in factions, seeking people who we agree with, making our little "in-groups," who we are comfortable with, getting frustrated with those who don't agree with us on everything

-We have the most important thing in common, and that is a common dependence of the Grace of Jesus Christ that is transforming us day by day. Amen?

-If you can remember these two things from this series make it these:

"UNITY"

And "PARTNERSHIP"

Unity in what? In modern "tolerance of each others differences?"

NO!

Unity in our dependence ON and example in CHRIST JESUS.

WE HAVE BEEN SAVED BY OUR KING, to LIVE LIKE OUR KING.

"PARTNERSHIP"

- Paul's Partnership with the Philippian church is "BLOSSOMING AGAIN" after a period of dormancy.

-He says in v. 10 "at length you have revived your concern for me" or Finally, your care for me blossomed again.

Is Paul criticizing them for their period of dormancy? Is he giving them a backhanded compliment?

NO!

-the Philippians were serving God in an age where things happened that were beyond their control, and they couldn't send the gift and the servant Epaphroditus when they wanted to.

-Paul clarifies by saying "You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity."

-Let me be clear - they never stopped being "partners in the gospel" just because the opportunity to do concrete acts of service wasn't there.

-we have sorely missed some opportunities. Missing each other, missing speaking encouraging words face to face, lamenting the trials our brothers and sisters are going through is just not the same online as it is when we can share grief and encouragement face to face.

-Follow Paul's example: did he get bitter? Did he complain? Did he say what took you so long?
NO.

Paul instead reminds them of a lesson that the Lord has been teaching him.

-whether he was rich or poor, whether he was full or hungry - he has learned how to be content in all circumstances - Paul says "I can do it all through him who gives me strength. "Him" being non other that Jesus - the one "In whom Paul lives and moves and has his being."

What lesson is God teaching you?

Maybe he is saying:

"Let go of the bitterness"

"let go of that image of yourself that you are holding yourself to.

"Stop trying to be so strong on your own, and let me be your strength."

"it's time to stop hiding - I want to walk with you again boldly and confidently"

"lift up your head, don't be ashamed - I have called you, I know you, and I'm still here"

"stop worrying - I know you only have a little right now, but I will supply all your need"

God is outrageously gracious toward us

How do I know this is true, and how can you know this is true, too?

Philippians 4:19 says "and my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

-Paul thanks the Philippians for their practical gift

-he can't return the favour in the same way (he has no wealth to give back)

-What he has he shares though - a blessing and encouragement: that God will return on them provision that Paul can't match.

The riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

You can't let go of that bitterness unless Jesus is there to take the weight of sin and anger.

You can't let go of that negative self-image unless Jesus is there to transform you.

You can't stop relying on your own strength unless Jesus is there to work through you.

You can't stop hiding unless Jesus is there calling you out again like a good shepherd.

You can't lift up your head unless Jesus is the one who speaks your name like he did to Mary at the tomb.

You can't stop worrying unless Jesus is there to speak the word that your Heavenly Father sees you.

Did the Philippians still go through trials after Paul says this final word of blessing to them? Absolutely. In fact, the tale of the Philippian church is bittersweet.

50 years after Paul wrote this letter to the church, we get a pleasing glimpse through a letter (not from the Bible) from Polycarp (a pastor from the church in Smyrna) to the church still in Philippi. In it he praises the excellent faithfulness to the way of Jesus within the Church two generations later. He "rejoices that the sturdy root of faith from the early days, still endures, and bears fruit unto the Lord Jesus Christ."

This letter, while pleasant, is our last glimpse into the church in Philippi. The city was destroyed by war and abandoned some time later. Theologian Robert Johnstone says this in his closing remarks of the church in Philippi: "Among the ruins of the city there have been found only the scantest Christian remains. Of the church that stood foremost among all the apostolic communities in faith and love, it may literally be said that not one stone stands upon another. It's whole career is a signal monument to the inscrutable counsels of God."

-None of us here know what the future holds for us personally or corporately. Upper Thames Missionary Church may, like the Church in Philippi may survive and thrive for another 50 or 100 years.

-like Philippi, Perhaps at some point in the not-to-distant future, not one stone will be left on top of another of the physical work we have done here in Mitchell.

Does this mean God was not faithful to them? By no means. For their work was not primarily physical, but spiritual. Their community was not defined by the stones that formed their church walls, but by the Lordship of Jesus who builds his people up as living stones into an eternal spiritual house.

The church in Philippi is gone - the people scattered, the buildings burnt and torn down. But the community of Philippi, and their work together in the Lord endures to this day and beyond because they did kingdom work. **And the Kingdom of God shall never fail or fall into ruin.**

As we let the story of the Philippian Church shape us - let us receive these words of encouragement and these final words of blessing in our hearts today and let us work boldly for the kingdom, - not for a temporary building, and not for our own reputation. Let us serve the king in humility and obedience as Jesus showed us - knowing that even a cup of water given to someone in need in Jesus' name will not go unnoticed in the kingdom of God.