

Southside Worship Online

11 October 2020, David Fender

Please go to <https://livestream.com/ggservices/ssuc> to access our worship service.
Families with children are encouraged to use family faith materials Ps Richard Moors has made available.

Gathering with God

You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you;
I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory.
Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.
I will praise you as long as I live. Psalm 63:1-4

Song *Our God*

Prayer of Approach & Confession

Awesome God,
We do sing Hallelujah, for You are worthy of our grateful
praise
You have surrounded us with abundant blessings,
All of creation bears testimony to Your goodness
Your amazing love sustains us daily, through the good
times and the bad
We love and adore You
But despite all You have done for us,

We daily fall short in our lives as your disciples:
We make selfish choices,
We are intolerant,
We let fears and doubts prevent us from doing Your will
Father forgive us and strengthen our determination to
live as Jesus taught.
In His name we pray,
Amen

Song *Revelation Song*

Bible Reading *Philippians 4:1-9*

Sermon

Offering

Lord God however we give our offerings to you through electronic funds transfer, or a cheque or in cash, we give knowing that everything is at your disposal, and you are not dependent on us. Nevertheless, please receive our offering that we give with great delight. It is our desire to honour you to show you reign in our hearts. Amen.

Prayers of intercession

Prayer is a conversation with God, not a formula. Yet sometimes we might need to use a "method" to freshen up our prayer time. We can pray the Psalms or other Scriptures (such as The Lord's Prayer), or use the ACTS method (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication). Today I invite you to use this five finger prayer to lead yourself in prayer

* When you fold your hands, the thumb is nearest you. Begin by praying for those closest to you--your loved ones (Philippians 1:3-5).

* The index finger is the pointer. Pray for those who teach--Bible teachers and preachers, and those who teach children (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

* The next finger is the tallest. It reminds you to pray for those in authority over you--national and local leaders, and your supervisor at work (1 Timothy 2:1-2).

* The fourth finger is usually the weakest. Pray for those who are in trouble or who are suffering (James 5:13-16).

* Then comes your little finger. It reminds you of your smallness in relation to God's greatness. Ask him to supply your needs (Philippians 4:6,19).

Song

Christ is enough

Affirmation / Blessing

Do what you have learned and received
and seen and heard in Christ,
and the peace of God will be with you.
And may that peace,
which passes all understanding,
guard our hearts and our minds
in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Anxiety, Prayer, and the Peace of God

Philippians 4:1-9

When Paul wrote these words though he wasn't remotely distant from his own suffering. He wrote those words while in prison. He wrote those words not knowing if he might be executed for nothing more than declaring his allegiance to Jesus Christ.

In his journey to Rome we know that he was beaten, he'd suffered a shipwreck, he'd been run out of numerous cities. He'd been betrayed by friends and engaged in some fairly acrimonious debates with other Christ followers.

The words Paul writes are embedded deep in the reality of his lived experience. They are words that unite his inner being with his outer circumstances. They are words that unite our anxiety, worries, stress and fear with the realities of a pandemic, a recession, of grief and loss because we are restricted in where we can go, who we can see and how we live our lives.

Where I'm leading is that Paul reminds us that when many of the things we take for granted to bring us joy are taken away, there is one thing that can never be removed. Jesus Christ.

So let's begin there, with Jesus Christ. After all, it is there, in him, in relation to our Lord, in the context of all we know that he has so graciously done for us, that we are to rejoice: "Rejoice in the Lord!"

Paul is declaring: "Jesus is our joy," and he is ours. That is why we can rejoice "always," at all times, in every circumstance, no matter the pain or pleasure. Our joy is constant not because our circumstances are but because Jesus is.

That is the first of three exhortations: "Rejoice in the Lord always: again I will say, Rejoice" (v. 4).

The second exhortation comes in v. 5 – "Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near"

The word gentleness suggests the ability to remain reasonable and calm when confronted by difficult people, to treat them calmly and fairly. Others suggest the idea of generosity or the willingness to make allowances; the quality that keeps one from always insisting on one's full rights. It's the opposite of entitlement; the opposite of always demanding one's due. It is the patient willingness to yield wherever yielding does not compromise moral principle.

Paul gives this reason because "the Lord is at hand" (v. 5b).

When Paul talks about the nearness of Jesus, I believe he's talking about a personal relationship. His point, then, is that the Lord is close to you, present with you, aware of your conduct, concerned about your relationships with others, available and willing to come to your aid and assist you.

The third of Paul's exhortations is a familiar one "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."

Here Paul is not encouraging us to be blithely unaware of the realities of our current situation, pretending that nothing is wrong. For some people we see that prayer is an escape from reality, or that it is a passive form of inaction.

Paul encourages us toward an active movement away from a Godless, sinful corrosive worrying toward an active laying of our realities before God. D. A. Carson has said, "The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything".

But how does this work? What is it about anxiety and prayer that put them in conflict with one another? More specifically, what is it about prayer that makes it an effective antidote to anxiety?

Anxiety is rooted in self, while prayer is rooted in God.

Anxiety is the fruit of a narrow, constricted view of life. The only thing one can see is the problems or perplexities surrounding us. Prayer is the fruit of a broad and expansive view of life in which God is so big that everything else, even our worst problems and worries, shrink into insignificance.

Anxiety is horizontal in focus. Prayer, on the other hand, is vertical in focus. That is to say, when you worry you are consumed with looking to the left and to the right, forward and backward. When you pray, you can't help but look up.

Anxiety never raises your eyes above your problems, your situation and circumstances. Prayer raises your eyes above and beyond yourself to God and his power.

Anxiety looks to self to solve problems. Prayer looks to God to endure problems.

When you are anxious, your circumstances and problems control you; they have sovereignty over you; you invest in them a power and authority to shape your life. When you are prayerful your circumstances shrink and are devoid of any such power to shape your life.

Anxiety is a concern over circumstances you can't control. Prayer is confidence in the God who controls your circumstances.

Anxiety is an expression of fear. Prayer is an expression of faith.

So having encouraged us to pray, Paul goes on to tell us what this prayer should look like:

“in everything”

“by prayer and petition” prayer involves praise, confession and thanksgiving, as well as intercessions.

“with thanksgiving” – thanksgiving reminds us of the attitude we have in prayer.

“requests” – Here Paul has in view the actual content of our prayers; the precise details.

“to God” – Or more literally, in the presence of God, face to face with him, as it were.

Paul describes the characteristics of prayer, and then describes its consequences. “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:7)

Paul is saying that we will experience the peace that exists in God himself. This is the tranquillity and joy and calm and serenity that characterises God's being.

Paul is saying: When we fervently and honestly and passionately pour out our requests to God, something of the very nature of God himself, his inner peace, comes into us and takes up residence and governs our hearts and overcomes and replaces our anxious thoughts and enables us to experience the depths of that spiritual serenity that God himself feels and enjoys. This is what Isaiah spoke of when he said of God: “You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord God is an everlasting rock” (Isa. 26:3-4).

And look at what this peace “does,” it guards your hearts and minds. Because we know that there are external forces around us, as followers of Christ we are not immune to them. We will and do get sick. I thank God daily that no one in our congregation has suffered from COVID19, but our faith does not exempt us from this. We have the potential to suffer financially as the economy goes into recession. Our marriages can and have broken apart, our children have made unwise life choices.

But the peace of God guards our hearts and minds. It is our inner being, our resilience, our capacity to face each day, our self-esteem, our self-worth, our Christ like character. These are protected and safe guarded as we seek God in the midst of our troubles. Amen.