



Sermon Growth Guide

November 15, 2020

Give Thanks – For Life Eternal

Philippians 3:7-14

Key Verse: Philippians 3:14

“I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

Big Idea: Press on toward life eternal.

Foundations

In our third week in the book of Philippians, we give thanks for life eternal. Pastor Tim asks three questions as we press on toward life eternal: (1) Have you met Jesus? (2) Have you suffered the loss of all things? and (3) Have you felt the power of resurrection?

Have you met Jesus? Can you sing with joy the hymn, “Oh, how sweet to trust in Jesus, / Just to trust His cleansing blood / And in simple faith to plunge me / ‘Neath the healing, cleansing flood!”? Do you know it takes a personal relationship with the living Christ to really know Him?

Have you suffered the loss of all things? What does this mean? This week we’re all invited into a special time of self-reflection. Do we value Christ as “the pearl of great price” or is Jesus one of many gods we half-elevate in our buffet of earthly treasures?

And have you felt the power of resurrection? Do you wake up each day knowing that you belong to the One who has conquered death? Do you take each step knowing that because Jesus lives, you too shall live?

Gathered together with your circle, in-person or online, open your time of study in prayer. Ask the Spirit to guide and guard your thinking and growing.

Understanding God’s Word

In verses 7-9, Paul talks about “counting everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus.” Here in the text, what does it mean to count everything as loss? What do we know about Paul’s context?

In verses 10 and 11, regarding “resurrection” and “suffering,” how does Paul unpack the idea of “knowing Christ”?

In verses 12-14, how many times do you find the phrase, “I press on”? As a group, unpack the theology in these three verses.

Applying God’s Word

Referring back to what your circle discussed regarding verses 7-9, host a conversation on how you can personally grow in your ability to “count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus.” What might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to let go of even right now so that you can better hold on to Christ and Christ alone?

Witnessing God’s Word

How do you imagine your life will look like to those around you as to live as one who “counts everything as loss for the sake of knowing Christ”? How can you share your love of Christ to someone who needs it most this week? Pray together that your time together will result in the saving of many lives.

We live in a FOMO culture. Do you know what FOMO is? Fear Of Missing Out. The fear that someone, somewhere is having a better time than you are! Social Media exacerbates this feeling. FOMO. FOMO is a product of YOLO, You Only Live Once. This is a strong Colorado kind of thing. Should I climb that 14-er? Should I drive up Pikes Peak and ski down? Should I sign up for the Leadville Trail 100-mile mountain bike endurance race or a stand-up whitewater paddle board competition in Salida next year? Why not do both? YOLO. You only live once. The thing is, YOLO produces FOMO. If I only live once, I don't want to miss the fun. So YOLO leads to FOMO. Oh no! Paul has another way to look at it today. I call it POTO. Press On TOWard. "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). This life is not all there is. This life is only the prelude, the intro, the warmup before the real act. What is before us, brothers and sisters in Christ, is life and life eternal in Jesus Christ. Let us give thanks.

Philippians, the Joy Letter written from imprisonment, is teaching us to give thanks in all circumstances and find joy in the Lord. The gifts of God are grounds for gratitude. No matter what the situation, we have reason to give thanks. Paul takes the metaphor of running a race. It's an athletic metaphor. I press on. I push through. I lean forward. Sure it's been hard, but the prize is out in front of me, so I don't dwell on what's behind me. Let that go. I strain toward what is ahead. The goal. The prize.

The upward call of Christ Jesus lifting me toward heaven. In Jesus, we have life and life eternal. This life is not all there is. "If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied" (1 Corinthians 15:19). FOMO, YOLO, OHNO! Not for us. We have heaven and eternal life in our sights. Paul's friend Peter put it this way: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you... In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials" (1 Peter 1:3-4, 6). The trials can't touch the unassailable inheritance of eternal life you have in Jesus.

Some will ask, "How does heaven help me now?" This is a common critique of Christianity, the kind of thing that sounds like opiate for the masses. Things are tough now but you get to go to heaven later, so just tolerate it. Maybe that doesn't feel like enough for you in the struggles you are facing. Actually, it isn't meant to be. We are not just waiting to fly away into the by and by. The prize, the upward call, the life eternal, is there for us right now. If you feel like the heavenward call is not enough, not the ground for thanksgiving it could be, I want to ask you three questions from Paul's Scripture here: (1) Have you met Jesus? (2) Have you suffered the loss of all things? and I'll explain that in a minute; and (3) Have you felt the power of resurrection?

(1) Have you met Jesus? Paul was a hard-charging, success-oriented, achiever of a young man. He shares a little of that in this letter just before the passage we read. If anybody else thinks they have something to be proud of, some success to lean on, I had more. I had more, Paul said. Paul had a great upbringing and solid education. He had Roman citizenship, which was a big

marker of the top echelon, and he used his birth position to his advantage to be the best he could be. Attack life. Go get it. Run hard. Hit the next rung on the ladder. Up, up, up. That was Paul. Then he met Jesus. Now that's all he wants. Have you met Jesus?

There are many things that distinguish Christianity from the world's religions and other spiritual pursuits. Chief among them is this: Christians believe and profess that Jesus, the same Jesus born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, killed in Jerusalem, Jesus died and then rose again. Jesus is not dead but alive and still lives to be known by those who trust Him. "But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:7-8). And verse 10: "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Philippians 3:10). How can you know Christ? Paul knows Christ Jesus. And knowing Him, continues to grow in knowledge of Him. When you are in a relationship, you learn more about each other. Paul is in a relationship with Jesus Christ, long after Jesus was killed on the cross. You can know Christ the very same way Paul did. Paul did not know Jesus as one of His disciples during the Lord's earthly ministry. He met Jesus after the resurrection, just as we do. He is knowable. He lives and makes Himself knowable to all who trust in Him. Risk a relationship with Jesus. I have sat with people who prayed for the very first time who said to me, "I feel silly. It feels like I'm talking to no one." But then they risk it, and they find, Jesus is there. Jesus is knowable. Do you know Jesus?

(2) Have you suffered the loss of all things? Okay, let me explain that now. Paul says, "But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider

everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:7-8). All that stuff Paul tried for, pursued, sought after, accomplished; all those gains; all those profits; all those degrees and positions he actually hit as a young man, all that, Paul now sees as worthless. Actually, less than worthless; a liability, a debt, because he lost all that time chasing that stuff—time he can't get back. Worthless, compared with the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus. Once the light of Christ breaks over you all those little lights lose their shine. It is a stunning revelation, a jarring turn, as it would be for any person. Maybe you have been there, or close. Everything I was striving after; everything I thought worthy of sacrifice, and late nights, and missing my family, and risking my health, or whatever ... I got it. Now it's about as valuable to me as dog mess I scrape off my shoe at the park. Why? Because I've found what really matters. The rest of it I lose, gladly.

In Matthew, Jesus said, "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it" (Matthew 13:44-46). That's what Paul has learned now. There is a pearl of great price, worthy of selling everything you have. It is Jesus. Knowing Jesus Christ. You'd sell everything, with joy, just to have that. Have you suffered the loss of all things? When you meet Jesus, nothing else carries as much worth.

(3) Have you felt the power of resurrection? How does Paul find joy in the middle of imprisonment, isolation, physical distancing ...? He knows the power of the resurrection. "I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation



in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11). It isn’t just that Jesus rose from the dead, and that means heaven is open, and I’m holding a ticket for heaven and after I suffer all this I get to go to heaven and that will be my reward. Maybe that’s enough for some people. It is a very good thing. But that’s not the power of the resurrection Paul is talking about here. He is talking about a present power; an internal, palpable, present power in the here and now. Resurrection power. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead, Paul writes in Romans, “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you” (Romans 8:11). The same power, resurrection power, lives in you right now. It isn’t that suffering isn’t real, isn’t painful, but this resurrection power is like an updraft. Have you ever watched an eagle soaring on an updraft? “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection.”

Then we get a look at how Paul thinks about his own suffering. “I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead” (Philippians 3:10-11). I want to participate in His sufferings, become like Him in His death, somehow to attain resurrection power over death. Paul is saying, right here, right now, I may be stuck in my house, I may be holed up in Roman prison, I may be limited in every conceivable way, right now I have the opportunity to know Jesus Christ; to grow in my relationship and intimate union with Jesus Christ; to get closer to Jesus today in my suffering. Paul is saying, I want to be so close to Jesus, to participate in what Jesus suffers, I want to stand so close to Jesus that when the world and darker powers throw stuff at Jesus it lands on me!

Paul’s sufferings only serve to push him closer to Jesus, which is his true reward and joy. So, Paul says, I hope to attain to the resurrection, right here, right now. I hope to live as one lifted, held, sustained by resurrection power right now. To live as one alive among those who live as though already dead.

Do you know Jesus? Do you release your allegiance to all lesser things; suffer the loss of all things? Do you feel the power of Jesus and His Spirit, resurrection power? If you do... well, if you don’t, then open your heart to it. Risk a relationship with Jesus. It isn’t an idea; it’s a relationship with a Savior and Lord and it has power, resurrection power, risk it. But if you do, if you know Jesus, suffer the loss of all things, feel resurrection power, then you can join with Paul and give thanks for the upward call in Christ Jesus, “Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

Just over a year ago I sat with our friend Steve Bodman. Not all of you knew Steve. He was an elder here and a deacon, leader of our Stephen Ministry, a heck of a great doctor, and not a bad fly-fisherman. Steve was losing his final battle with cancer. I had the privilege of sitting with him a few times as he lay in bed. Steve said to me one of those times, “Tim, I just can’t imagine how people do it. How do they do this without Jesus? If I didn’t have Jesus, I’d be so devastated. How do they see the end of life approaching when they think this life is all there is?” It wasn’t easy for Steve, those final days, or for his wife Jean or family or friends, but we sat there waiting for Jesus. I mean, every time he dozed off then woke up, Steve expected to see Jesus right there! Then, one day, he did. Life. Life eternal. It is found in Jesus. Give thanks.

