

19 S. after Pentecost 10/11/20  
Philippians 4:4-13 23A

**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. 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. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

Euodia and Syntyche were their names. But, you don't have to know their names to know they were having quite the row with one another. I'm guessing that the words of our Epistle reading are, at least to some degree, familiar to you. But, I want to call your attention to and hold before you the words of the verses immediately before the words of our lesson, where Paul writes these words,

I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life (Ph 4:2-3).

History does not record for us the exact nature of why they were at one another's throats, just that they were. And I want to emphasize that these were two Christians fighting with each other. And sadly, the congregation at Philippi – to whom Paul wrote the words of our lesson – had taken sides, and the fighting between Euodia and Syntyche caused fighting within the congregation, and just as Euodia and Syntyche were separated from one another, the entire congregation at Philippi was in danger of being divided from one another.

What's that old saying? "The more things change, the more they stay the same". The names may change, but you really don't need to have Euodia and Syntyche to know division, separation, anger, fighting, discord.

I. Sin divides, sin divides from God and from one another.

You need look no further than fair Eden's garden, because that's where it all began. Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree, and they were separated from God by their sin. And it's not long that we see sin divide from one another as Cain slays his brother Abel.

We see the division of sin all around today. Wars, and rumors of wars, rioting and anarchy in our streets. Crime rates, against our neighbor and our neighbor's property, are soaring at astronomical rates throughout our nation.

And take a good look at your life. You fight with your spouse. Your fight with you children. You hate your job and can't stand your supervisor. You haven't spoken to your own brother or sister in how many years?

And we dare not overlook our greatest fight, the fight with yourself. Your neighbor offended you, grieved you, hurt you, and you know you should go talk to him/her – just the two of you – but you don't, so you just seethe with rage. You know what a jerk you were to your spouse, or your child, but your fragile ego is such that you cannot be honest and apologize and ask for forgiveness. God promises and promises, but you doubt His promises. God forgives you, but you won't forgive yourself, as though you are greater than God. Your life, your thoughts, your words, your deeds, is a living witness to the words of Paul, "I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing" (Ro 7:19).

As we feebly struggle in this Church Militant, Paul writes, "Rejoice in the Lord". Do you notice how Paul directs you away from yourself to fix your eyes on the Lord your God?

That is because when your sin separated you from God and your neighbor and threatened to separate you from God for all eternity in the

fires of hell, God did for you what you could not do for yourself – He saved you from your sin. **II.**

And He saved you by sending His only-begotten Son, Jesus. The very Son of God humbled Himself to be born of a virgin and become a real human man. Upon that human frame, He took all the division, the separation, the anger, the fighting, the discord of sin – and all its wages of death. And He carried them to the cross, where His blood was shed all over that cross to wash and cleanse you from all your sin (cf. 1 Jn 1:7).

Now, in Christ, that sin that divides and separates you from God and from your neighbor is gone. You are reconciled in Christ, reconciled to your Father in heaven and to your neighbor.

Rejoice in the Lord always, Dear Child of God. You have been baptized into Christ, and that means your name is written in the Lamb's book of life. You live in Christ today and forever.

And that means this for you today: I invite you to once again take a look at the cross. Take a good look, and you will see that the cross is made from 2 beams. That vertical beam teaches us of our relationship with God -- God reaches out to us in love. The horizontal beam teaches us about our relationship to our neighbor. Just as God reaches out to us in love and forgives us, we reach out in the love and forgiveness of Christ to our neighbor. Baptized into Christ, we are a "little Christ" and we treat our neighbor just as God treats us in Christ. **III.**

Paul says it this way in our lesson, "Let your reasonableness be known to everyone" (v. 5). The word "Reasonableness" here means thoughtfulness, patience, consideration, gentleness. It is the very opposite of the self-centered and selfish contentiousness of a mean world.

Look at the meekness and gentleness of our Lord Christ (cf. 2 Co 10:1). He was, and is, very God of very God. At there He stood, very God of very God in human body before Pilate. And Pilate wants to know if He is a king. But, Jesus is just basically silent, as the crowd mocks and jeers Him, Barabbas is released in His place, and He is bound and led out to be crucified. You may have heard the hymn, "He Could Have Called 10,000 angels". That hymn teaches us that Jesus could have called 10,000 angels from heaven to fight for Him, but ... He didn't. Did you hear me on that? He could have, but He didn't. That's reasonableness; patience, gentleness.

Exactly the opposite of the anger and angst and rage of a world dead in sin that causes me to get in my neighbor's face and scream and demand to be heard, without even giving one millisecond of consideration to listening to my neighbor.

Paul reminds us that even though we live in a world where this seems to be the norm, we can show patience, even in times of struggle, trouble, sorrow. Even in the midst of such, we continue to rejoice. We behave as God's people even when those with whom we must deal with do not. As our relationship to God is marked by forgiveness, our relationship with others is to be marked by forgiveness - by patience and gentleness - as well. We Christians are the people of forgiveness.

It is the reality of life, the pains and irritations of life and the hostility of the world, that Paul has in mind when he says, "**Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God**" (v. 6). The world will not always treat you with patience and forgiveness. The citizens of this present age will always be looking for, and sometimes just making

up, a reason to attack you and hurt you. Plus, our lives today are not immune from life in a sinful world. We will get sick. We will get injured. Sorrow and troubles will find us. But, Dear Saints of God, we bear witness to our faith, and trust, and hope in God, and His love for us poor sinners, that we are the people of God in Jesus Christ.

**Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.**