

#1804  
Cf. #16 #441 #569

Philippians 4:6-20<sup>1</sup>  
In all situations & for all things,  
give thanks.  
Thanksgiving Eve  
Supplementary Lectionary  
Series "B," Epistles

Pastor A. J. Kunde  
Grace WELS Durand MI  
7:00 p.m., Wednesday  
November 27, 2013  
Door Offering –  
Good Samaritan Fund

<sup>6</sup> Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

<sup>10</sup> I rejoice greatly in the LORD that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. <sup>11</sup> I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret [mystery] of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

<sup>14</sup> Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles [tribulation]. <sup>15</sup> Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the Gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; <sup>16</sup> for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. <sup>17</sup> Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. <sup>19</sup> And my God will fulfill all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

<sup>20</sup> To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD  
I. IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES  
II. BY FOLLOWING HIS WORD  
III. FOR GOD'S GLORY

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<sup>1</sup> *The New International Version*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House) 1984. All Scripture references are taken from this translation unless noted otherwise.

In the Name of Jesus, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be thanksgiving, glory, honor and praise, now and forever, Dear Fellow-Redeemed,

The Apostle Paul was in Rome under house arrest. That meant that he had to provide for his own upkeep. When the Philippian Christians found out about this, they sent St. Paul aid through their fellow-Christian Epaphroditus. It was this help and aid that the Philippians had sent to St. Paul that was the motivation for St. Paul to send to the Philippians this Epistle – his “thank you letter.”

In this portion of this Epistle or Letter to the Philippians, St. Paul thanks the Philippians for the help they sent to him. More significantly, St. Paul gave thanks to the LORD God for motivating the Philippians to send this help and for the faithfulness the LORD God had created in the hearts of these Philippian Christians. As we examine this portion of St. Paul’s letter of thanksgiving, we see that we too are to GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD. GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD ... I. IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES; II. BY FOLLOWING HIS WORD; and, III. FOR GOD’S GLORY

GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD  
I. IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

St. Paul writes,

***<sup>10</sup> I rejoice greatly in the LORD that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. <sup>11</sup> I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret [mystery] of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do everything through him who gives me strength (4:10-13).***

St. Paul says that he had “learned to be content whatever the circumstances.” It did not matter if there were times of feast or famine for St. Paul, or times of plenty or want. St. Paul had “learned the secret or mystery of being content in every situation.” This secret or mystery was that St. Paul could “do everything through the LORD Jesus who gave him strength.” St. Paul refers to this truth as a secret or mystery, because it was in effect only by revelation – the revelation and promise of God’s Word. St. Paul communicates this secret or mystery to his fellow-Christians in Philippi.

At the beginning of our text, St. Paul says, “Do not be anxious about anything” (4:6a). As was the case for St. Paul and Silas when they visited Philippi, the Philippian believers in Jesus were undergoing trials and tribulations, turmoils and troubles. When St. Paul had first visited them (cf. Acts 16:11-40), it ended up that Paul and Silas were severely beaten, whipped and jailed. The Philippians were undoubtedly undergoing some of the same tribulations that St. Paul and Silas had encountered. How could they endure?

How could they remain faithful? How could St. Paul endure and remain faithful? The secret, the mystery, was that they could do all things and endure all things through Christ alone who gave them strength. This was true not only regarding troubles and persecution but also concerning daily needs.

Jesus told his disciples in the Sermon on the Mount,

**<sup>31</sup> ... do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his Kingdom and his Righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own** (Matthew 6:31-34).

Your heavenly Father knows you need these things, and he provides them according to his grace, mercy and for his glory. Thus, St. Paul indicates how to deal with these needs and anxieties.

St. Paul says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (4:6). Anxiety, stress and worry are common to everyone. St. Paul says, "deal with them through prayer." In his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, St. Paul said, "Pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:17&18).

Pray continually with all kinds of prayers and requests, petitions and intercessions. There is nothing too small nor anything too great that cannot be brought to the Throne of God by his children through faith in Christ Jesus. The LORD hears the prayers of his people – believers in Jesus. He answers those prayers in accord with what is good for his people. In addition, just as you and I will not give something bad or hurtful to our children when they ask for it, so also our LORD God will not give to believers in Jesus something that would ultimately be bad or hurtful for them. Jesus made this point, once again in his Sermon on the Mount, when he said,

**<sup>9</sup> "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? <sup>11</sup> If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!** (Matthew 7:9-11).

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (4:6). For Jesus' sake, the LORD God hears the prayers and requests of his children and answers for their good.

In addition, St. Paul urges that prayers be brought to the LORD God with thanksgiving. The LORD God does everything and controls everything for the benefit of his people. St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians that "God placed all things under [Jesus'] feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills

everything in every way” (cf. Ephesians 1:22&23). Jesus rules, guides, controls and directs all things for the benefit of his Church, for the benefit of believers – your benefit and mine. Therefore, in all circumstances give thanks to the LORD; he has everything under control for you.

#### APPLICATION

When we examine ourselves on the basis of what St. Paul wrote to the Philippians, we can certainly see our failures. St. Paul says, “In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (4:6b). How often are we thankful in every situation, in every circumstance?

Paul says, “Do not be anxious about anything.” It is not true, however, that we do become anxious and stressed about the things that take place in our lives? We worry about our own futures. We are concerned about how our children and grandchildren will cope and turn out. We become uptight about the economy, jobs, retirement, and the political scene. We worry about our parents and grandparents. There is always something about which we can worry. Regarding all of this, St. Paul tells us the secret, the mystery, of how to cope: We too can do all things, endure all things, through Christ Jesus who gives us strength. In that faith and confidence, then, carry out what St. Paul says, “In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (4:6b). While it is true that we do not know what the future holds, we do know who holds the future: Our LORD Jesus Christ. Jesus has promised in his Word to work out all things for our ultimate benefit (cf. Romans 8:28). In that faith and trust and confidence, then, hear, learn and follow his Word.

#### GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD II. BY FOLLOWING HIS WORD

You have already heard two aspects of following God’s Word as proclaimed by the Apostle Paul: “Do not be anxious about anything ... in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God” (4:6). Those are two directives that God gives us in his Word. Then, St. Paul directs Christians toward even more things that they are to be doing.

St. Paul writes,

***<sup>8</sup> Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. <sup>9</sup> Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice... (4:8&9a).***

Think about, focus upon these things.

St. Paul writes, first of all, to “brothers.” He is writing to fellow-Christians, specifically in Philippi but then to all Christians.

He says, focus, think about ... “whatever is true [αἴληθην].” Believers know what is true by focusing on and penetrating God’s Word as part of their daily lives.

St. Paul says, focus on, think about ... “whatever is noble [σεμναν].” Those things which are respectable and honorable are to be of concern to Christians.

Focus on ... “whatever is right [δίκαιο~].” This Greek word can be translated as righteous and righteousness. Christians are to remember that they have been declared righteous, justified, sins forgiven, by faith alone in Jesus. In that faith and forgiveness, Christians will follow God’s Word to do what is right according to his Word.

Focus on ... “whatever is pure [αἴγνον].” This particular Greek word refers to that which is sacred and undefiled. Christians will, therefore, avoid those things which are not sacred and not pure. Those things particularly concerning sexual immorality, debauchery and the like, will be avoided.

Focus on ... “whatever is lovely [προσφιλην].” This does not refer necessarily to that which is lovely to the eye but to that which is pleasing and agreeable in God’s sight.

Focus on ... “whatever admirable [εὐ[φίμο].” This refers to something that is well spoken of; it acknowledges that some things are to be admired and imitated.

Focus on ... “anything ... excellent [ἀρετην].” This is that which is virtuous. Again this would exclude any kind of sinful activity or thinking or speaking.

Focus on “anything ... praiseworthy [εἰ[παίνο].” We certainly are not going to praise something that is bad or wicked or contrary to God’s Word – although the world is guilty of doing that.

Then, St. Paul tells believers to pay attention to him – to the things St. Paul preached, taught and practiced. He says that believers are to do, to “put ... into practice [πραξσω],” the things that they “learned [μανθωνω], or received [παρалаμβωνω], or heard [αἰκουνω] from [St. Paul]” or saw [ειδον] St. Paul doing. But St. Paul does not stop there.

Having given this impressive list to the Philippians believers, St. Paul commends these Christians for doing all these things. He says, “I rejoice greatly in the LORD that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it” (4:10). We can surmise from this statement that the Philippians may not have been aware that St. Paul was under house arrest in Rome and that he was in need. The Philippians had probably lost track of St. Paul’s whereabouts. When they

did locate St. Paul, they sent their fellow believer Epaphroditus with their gifts. They were repeating what they had done previously as St. Paul indicates.

***14 Yet it was good of you [Philippians] to share in my troubles [tribulation]. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the Gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need (4:14-16).***

St. Paul commends these Christians for their faithfulness in showing their concern for him and in doing the things he had mentioned previously in his letter.

#### APPLICATION

You may have noticed that this text for thanksgiving gives us a list of many things that we are to do. Listen again to these paragraphs:

***6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God....***

.....  
***8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. 9a Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice....***

.....  
***14 ... it was good of you to share in my troubles [tribulation].... 15b ... when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. 17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. 18a I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent... (4:6,8-9a,14-18a).***

When you and I hear of all the things we are supposed to do and all of the things which the Philippians Christians had done and were doing, does it not cause for us a degree of uneasiness and shame? Yes, the things St. Paul writes are Law; and the primary function of the Law is SOS – Shows us Our Sins.

Paul wrote to the Romans,

***19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. 20 Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the Law; rather, through the Law we become conscious of sin (Romans 3:19&20).***

We come conscious of sin through the Law. That is the SOS of the Law – Shows us Our Sins. But there is more here than just the SOS of the Law – that the Law Shows us Our Sins.

St. Paul was writing to the Christians in Philippi. St. Paul is also addressing us – Christians here in Durand, Michigan. While the primary purpose of the Law is, indeed, to Show us Our Sins (SOS) and to show us the punishment we deserve because of our sins, having been brought to faith in Jesus through the Gospel, thus, having the forgiveness of sins, the Law also is for us – as it was for the Philippian believers – the Law is also a guideline.

For believers, for you and for me, the Law is “a lamp to our feet and a light for our path” (cf. Psalm 119:105). Yes, the Old Adam in us; the Sinful Nature with which we were born, will buck and revolt – (the Lutheran Confessions refer to the Old Adam as “an intractable, refractory ass”<sup>2</sup>) – but the New Person in us, created by the Holy Spirit through the Good News about Jesus – the New Person not only wants to do what God wants but also does do what God wants assisted and directed by the Holy Spirit. St. Paul said this earlier in this Epistle to the Philippians, “It is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (2:13).

So, Christian friends, we struggle, we do battle, we strive and pursue those things that God wants us to do. When we fail, we return to the cross of Christ for forgiveness and for renewed strength to pursue that which God wants us to do. As we do this, it is all to God’s glory.

### GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD III. FOR GOD’S GLORY

Note the number of times that St. Paul refers to the LORD in connection with the activity of and benefits for the Philippian believers. Paul says, “I rejoice greatly in the LORD that at last you have renewed your concern for me” (4:10a). Paul says,

***<sup>17</sup> Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. <sup>18</sup> I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God (4:17&18).***

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<sup>2</sup> Bente, F., *Concordia Triglotta*, (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House) 1997. *Formula Of Concord, Thorough Declaration, VI. Of The Third Use Of God’s Law*, ¶ 24: “For the Old Adam, as an intractable, refractory ass, is still a part of them [the Christian in this life], which must be coerced to the obedience of Christ, not only by the teaching, admonition, force and threatening of the Law, but also oftentimes by the club of punishments and troubles, until the body of sin is entirely put off, and man is perfectly renewed in the resurrection....” Cf. also in Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, Volume 61*, (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House) 1998.

Paul says, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (4:13). He says, "My God will fulfill all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (4:19). He says, "The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (4:7). St. Paul concludes, then: "To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (4:20). All of what St. Paul says reflects God's grace and is to God's glory.

Everything that St. Paul wrote to the Philippians was for their welfare, for their activity as believers, and for the glory of God. As they did not succumb to anxiety in all circumstances; as in all circumstances they made known their needs to God in prayer and with thanksgiving; as they daily pursued living as St. Paul directed according to God's Word – all of these things gave glory to God and their LORD Jesus Christ.

#### APPROPRIATION

So it is with us. All that we do that conforms to God's will and Word is for his glory. It is all for God's glory and not for our bragging or boasting. Jesus put this truth in these Words, "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'" (Luke 17:10). As that is the case, then, what we do as Christians following God's Word is for the glory of God through our LORD Jesus.

St. Paul says the same thing when he writes to the Colossians: "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the Name of the LORD Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Colossians 3:17). Even the struggle in which we engage as Christians against our Old Sinful Nature is for God's glory.

#### CONCLUSION

Give thanks to the LORD through Jesus Christ your Savior. Give thanks, for Jesus is with us in every circumstance – circumstances which he controls and directs for our good. Give thanks, because Jesus has forgiven our sins and by faith has given us his Word as a guideline to follow in our daily lives. Give thanks, for the fact that we are believers in Jesus by grace and that the good works we do by following God's Word are all to his glory. Amen.