

**Sermon preached by Canon Jim Holbeck at the Healing Service at St. Andrew's Cathedral, Sydney on
Wed 20th June 2007.**

Reading: Phil 4:4-9. Topic: "What God Requires Us To Do To Receive His Blessings"

- It's wonderful to see answers to prayer. It may be the safe arrival of a grandchild. It may be the coming of rain in many parched areas of our land. It's easy to thank God for the good times. But it takes faith to thank Him when things are not going well.
- St Paul as he wrote Philippians sat in prison facing possible death. It was not humanly speaking a time to rejoice. Yet he wrote in 4:11, "*I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.*"
- The OT prophet Habakkuk had written in chapter 3:17 that no matter how bad the situation may be, he would continue to rejoice in God. *Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, 18 yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation.*
- Paul wrote something similar to the believers in Philippi. He wanted them to know the victories he had known in adverse situations. He encourages them to do 3 things to receive the blessing they needed and that he had known.

THREE THINGS TO DO TO RECEIVE GOD'S BLESSING

1. BE JOYFUL. Phil 4:4 *4. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!*

This was an attitude they needed to adopt and to develop, to *rejoice in the Lord*.

"Always", in the good times and in the bad times.

- Paul lived his message. Humanly speaking it may have been difficult for him in prison to rejoice in the Lord as he wrote to the Philippian church. He had some very unhappy experiences in that city.
- While he was imprisoned, there were some in Philippi who were preaching Christ from wrong motives to get under Paul's skin. Yet Paul knew that as Christ was preached, people could hear about Him and respond in faith to Him. So he rejoiced that their preaching could bring people to Christ in spite of the preachers' antagonism towards him personally. You see he was rejoicing in the Lord in the midst of his rotten situation, his lousy circumstances.
- Why should they rejoice in the Lord? Because of who the Lord was and because of what He had done and continued to do.
- Who was this Lord in whom they were to rejoice? Jesus. Saviour. Creator of the universe. Sustainer of the universe, the One who holds all things in His hands. As Paul wrote in 4:11, the time will come when Jesus returns and *11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. He is Lord and Master.*
- What had He done? He laid aside His privileges as the Son of God and came down from heaven to live and to die as a human for humans. Phil 2:7... *emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8 he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross.*

Jesus died for us and lives to help us. Jesus the Son of God came and died on the cross for you and for me, to enable us to be forgiven and to have eternal life.

- They could rejoice always because He was the crucified and exalted Lord, and would always be in control of everything and of everyone in this world.
- You may be in a difficult situation but God encourages you (and indeed commands you) to *rejoice in the Lord always* for your own sake as well as for His.
- There is no real ongoing healing until you begin to rejoice in the Lord. And you can begin tonight by getting right with God through Jesus and learning to rejoice in Him, for that is where His blessings are to be found, in Him and in Him alone.

2. BE GENTLE. 4:5. *5 Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand*

- The word for "reasonableness" is rich in meaning. It can mean *moderation, gentleness, appropriateness, being appropriate in every situation.*
- Paul wrote to Titus about Christian behaviour, *Titus 3:2 to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarrelling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy towards all people.*
- James wrote about true wisdom that it is gentle. , *Jas 3:17 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy.*
- Gentle, willing to yield. Giving up the struggle against the Lord, being unwilling to yield to Him.
- Giving up the struggle against other people wanting or demanding your own way. Rather yield to God Himself to set the agenda for your life. That is the way of peace.
- Gentleness is strength not weakness. Paul in strongly defending his ministry wrote in 2 Cor 10:1 *I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ--.* I.e., God gave me this ministry but I will exercise it powerfully according to the *meekness and gentleness of Christ Himself.*

- Why could Paul be gentle and say the Christians in Philippi needed to be gentle? Because they weren't going it alone as they yielded their lives to Him for as Paul put it, The Lord is "At hand"

The word for "at hand" is engus which can mean near in time or space.

Near in time. He is coming again at the end of human history to fully establish His kingdom and destroy evil.

Near in space. Jesus promised in Mat 19:19 ... *if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.*"

He is near. He is here tonight to hear our cry for help. He is here to answer our cry for help, as only He can.

3. BE PRAYERFUL..4:6. *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

One of the so-called worst songs ever composed had the words, "Don't worry. Be happy!" But God through St Paul has a much better response to difficult situations. "Don't worry. Pray!" It means that you can get rid of fear and anxiety by telling God about your situation in prayer.

Fear and anxiety are debilitating, stress inducing and dangerous to our health.

The word for anxiety is merimnao which can mean being distracted or having a divided mind.

It can describe a mind out of control, either chaotic in its thinking, all over the place so there is no peace.

Or it can be a mind fixed on some problem and always coming back to it again and again so that there is no peace. What that person said or what that person did, or what I should have done. The thought is always there and there is no peace.

How to get rid of fear and anxiety. God says *Have no anxiety about anything no matter how big it seems or how little. Tell God about your concerns. Make them known to Him in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving.*

Pass over those anxieties to Him because He can do something about them.

The writer of Ps 55:22 put it, *Cast your burden on the LORD, and he will sustain you;*

Peter in 1 Pet 5:7 wrote, *Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.*

You cast your burden on the Lord, hand your anxieties over to Him as you hand them over to Him in prayer.

When you take back what you handed over to Him it becomes a renewed anxiety. Leave the fears and anxieties with Him and let Him sort it all out as you watch in prayer with thanksgiving. Col 4:2.

So tonight are you:-

- Rejoicing in the Lord? You need to.
- Gentle in all your relationships? Are you yielded to Him, knowing that He is near to help you. You need to be.
- Prayerful? Are you willing to hand everything over to Him in prayer believing He can make a difference in any human situation including yours?

Then you are a candidate for God's healing and blessing. How does He do it?

WHAT GOD WILL GIVE IN RETURN. HIS PEACE.

4:7 *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

1. This peace cannot be fully understood but is real.

God's peace has to be experienced to be believed. I've seen people give their lives to Jesus, accepting Him as Saviour and Lord and knowing peace with God and find immediate physical and emotional healing.

I've seen others whose problem initially did not change, but as they experienced more of the peace of God in their lives, they received more and more healing.

God's peace is tangible. It is real. It makes a world of difference in the physical and emotional health of those who receive it.

2. This peace protects our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

Fear and anxiety can tear you apart physically and emotionally. But God's peace can give you the ability to cope and to conquer the problems we all face in life.

Let's do it!

I want you to think of an area of concern that you have. It may be for yourself or for a loved one or for a friend.

It's something you've had on your mind and you can't stop thinking about it. You certainly are not at peace about it. Just write it down on the paper provided and bring it forward to the bin at the front as a sign that you are handing it over to God. We will then hand those concerns over to God in prayer and ask for the peace He promises, in our bodies, minds and spirits. All the papers will immediately be shredded. You can't take them home. Neither should you take back the concerns you hand over to Him.

Lord as we now hand those anxieties over to You and leave them for You to sort out, please give us that peace that does pass all understanding as we trust You. We humbly ask this in Jesus' name. AMEN.