



Rejoice In The Lord Always!

Sermon-based Guide for Reflection and Discussion Week of January 9

Scripture: **Philippians 1:3-6, 9-11**

Sermon Title: *The Gospel Is A Living Thing*

The Letter to the Philippians is a “love letter.” It is a love letter between Paul and his spiritual brothers and sisters who comprise the church in Philippi. It is also a love letter between them and Jesus. And that love brings Joy.

This is the Jesus whose story and ministry make up the “gospel.” The gospel of Jesus stands in the center of their life together. The Gospel is Jesus. It is, by implication, his life and his teachings. It also is what his death and resurrection accomplishes for Paul, the Philippians, and us. In his death, Jesus overcomes our enslavement to sin (including all of our attempts on our own to live into God’s standards of righteousness) and to the death that sin brings. The resurrection of Jesus also is gospel – it is the sure and certain sign that the life that Jesus lives (eternal and abundant) is the life that we live as well.

This means that the gospel is, 1) a living thing. We share, and we grow into it (Paul’s joy comes in knowing that the Philippians are “sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.” 2) The living gospel is a growing thing (“your love may overflow more and more.”) – and it moves toward a goal (“the one who began a good work in you will bring it to completion by the day of Christ Jesus”) which Paul sees as the eventual “harvest of righteousness.”

It is our call from Christ to live into the gospel, just as Paul and the Philippians are doing. Is the gospel of Jesus alive within you (his presence, his life over sin and death)? How are you growing into it, “more and more with knowledge and full insight”?

There is life in the gospel, abundant life and life that is greater than anything or anyone can provide.

Questions:

1. Paul tells the Philippians: “I thank my God every time I remember you...” Who is someone in your life that, every time you think of them, you are thankful?
2. Paul speaks of “sharing the gospel.” Gospel is one of those words that we use fairly regularly, but how would you define it? What do you think Paul means by the word “gospel”?
3. Verse 6 says: “I am confident of this, that the one who *began* a good work among you will *bring it to completion* by the day of Jesus Christ.” Paul frequently uses this theme of the journey of a life of faith moving us closer to Jesus and the cause of Christ. Can you speak to ways in which “the one who began a good work in you” is even now moving you closer towards Christ. Give examples of how you have changed and grown in your faith.