

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Trinity 18

Proper 23 Green



**Collect**

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us your gift of faith that, forsaking what lies behind and reaching out to that which is before, we may run the way of your commandments and win the crown of everlasting joy; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

**Philippians 4:1-9** English Standard Version (ESV)

**Exhortation, Encouragement, and Prayer**

4<sup>1</sup> Therefore, my brothers,<sup>[a]</sup> whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. <sup>2</sup>I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, I ask you also, true companion,<sup>[b]</sup> help these women, who have labored<sup>[c]</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your reasonableness<sup>[d]</sup> be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; <sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>What you have learned<sup>[e]</sup> and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

**Footnotes:** a. or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 8, 21. b. or *loyal Syzygus*; Greek *true yokefellow*. c. or *strived* (see 1:27). d. or *gentleness*. e. or *these things—which things you have also learned*.

**COMMENT:** Faith, friendship, reconciliation and strong, ethical behaviour are all wrapped into these few verses. They are among the most intimate words written by the austere apostle Paul. Since this was the first congregation he had founded in

Macedonia, a northern province of Greece, he had a very special relationship with the Christians of Philippi. Quarrelling in any congregation causes great disruption. We know nothing other than their names about the two women Euodia and Syntyche. Nor do we know whether their quarrel was personal or theological. The “loyal companion” whom Paul asked to help them resolve their differences may refer to Epaphroditus whom Paul had sent as his letter carrier. Actually Paul looked past this temporary distress among the Philippians and invited them to rejoice with him in the Lord. Paul was also a man of prayer. Here he speaks of two very significant ways of praying: supplication and thanksgiving. It was normal for him to begin his letters with a word of thanksgiving for those who he addressed (Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3). He felt it very normal to bring every concern he had before the throne of grace expecting that he would ultimately know God’s will in each situation. It was this life of prayer that gave him “the peace that passes understanding.” Strong moral behaviour marked all of Paul’s admonitions to his correspondents. Here in verse 8 he summarized how he believed every person should live in the real world. In doing so, the Philippians would be following his example and doing as he had taught them (verse 9). It may be difficult for Christians of our day to realize just who made up many of these early congregations. As it had been with Jesus in many instances, it was the moral outcasts like prostitutes and the ethically corrupt like tax collectors who were attracted to the Christian way. Paul’s ministry in Philippi had begun with two people, neither of whom would have been among the prestigious citizens of that Roman city - a woman of commerce and the town jailer (Acts 16:14-15, 25-40). In the households of both of these who were baptized would have been many slaves too. Their former life had been like, Paul expected everyone to behave according to the same high standard.

## **Matthew 22:1-14** English Standard Version (ESV)

### **The Parable of the Wedding Feast**

<sup>1</sup>And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying, <sup>2</sup>“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son, <sup>3</sup>and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. <sup>4</sup>Again he sent other servants, saying, ‘Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast.’ <sup>5</sup>But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, <sup>6</sup>while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. <sup>7</sup>The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, but those invited were not worthy. <sup>9</sup>Go therefore to the main roads and invite to the wedding feast as many as you find.’ <sup>10</sup>And those servants went out into the roads and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good. So the wedding hall was filled with guests. <sup>11</sup>“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. <sup>12</sup>And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a

wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. <sup>13</sup>Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ <sup>14</sup>For many are called, but few are chosen.”

**COMMENT:** The parable tells of a royal banquet to which outsiders were welcomed after all the invited guests sent their excuses for refusing has many undertones. It condemns those who refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah. It is also a prophecy about the messianic banquet which was a traditional part of the Jewish expectation of the coming of the Messiah at the end of history. According to Scholar Joachim Jeremias (1900-1979), “wedding clothes” (*endyma gamou*) means “not a special garment, worn on festive occasions, but a newly washed garment. The soiled garment is an insult to the host” (Parables, 187; he cites Revelation 19:8; 22:14). We are perhaps meant to infer (especially given the extremity of the situation) that the king furnished the proper clothing - which this particular man did not wear. The garment may be an allusion to Baptism.

**Psalm 23** *Dominus regit me* Grail Pslater

**℟ In the Lord’s own house shall I dwell for ever and ever.**

<sup>1</sup> The Lord is my shepherd;  
there is nothing I shall want.

<sup>2</sup> Fresh and green are the pastures  
where he gives me repose.

Near restful waters he leads me,  
<sup>3</sup> to revive my drooping spirit. **℟**

He guides me along the right path;  
he is true to his name.

<sup>4</sup> If I should walk in the valley of darkness  
no evil would I fear.

You are there with your crook and your staff;  
with these you give me comfort. **℟**

<sup>5</sup> You have prepared a banquet for me  
in the sight of my foes.

My head you have anointed with oil;  
my cup is overflowing. **℟**

<sup>6</sup> Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me  
all the days of my life.

In the Lord's own house shall I dwell  
for ever and ever. **℟**

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son :  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be :  
world without end. Amen.**

**COMMENT:** This shepherd's psalm is perhaps the most loved of all in our Bible. It still brings strength and solace to the faithful. Ancient tradition and a title in the Hebrew Scriptures claimed that it was from the hand of David, Israel's legendary shepherd king. Though not entirely impossible, it is unlikely. Reference to the "house of the Lord" in verse 6 indicates a later date, since the temple was not built until after David had died. On the other hand, prior to the building of the temple by Solomon, the tabernacle of the wilderness wanderings was also considered The LORD's dwelling place. On the whole, the metaphor of the divine shepherd appeared in many Old Testament references (Psalm 100:3; Ezekiel 34; 37:24). This should not surprise us because the ancient Israelites to whom the Old Testament authors looked for their definitive traditions were primarily a pastoral people with their chief wealth represented by their flocks. During their early history, they depended on flocks of sheep for most aspects of their livelihood including food, clothing, tent, a medium of exchange and the central offering of ritual sacrifice. Even today in the thoroughly urbanized state of Israel, one can still see Palestinian shepherds with their large flocks on hillsides within a very short distance of Jerusalem and Jericho. There is a second metaphor which memory frequently overlooks in reciting this psalm. Verse 5 transfers the scene to the obligatory hospitality which every Middle Eastern pastoral society extended to anyone fleeing from enemies. Tribal feuds caused many such flights. A hunted man merely had to touch the tent of anyone with whom he might seek refuge to lay upon his host the requirement of providing sanctuary and sustenance. As seen by the psalmist, the divine host provides far more than is necessary: indeed a feast with sweet unguents poured on his head and an overflowing wine cup.

### **Post Communion**

We praise and thank you, O Christ, for this sacred feast: for here we receive you, here the memory of your passion is renewed, here our minds are filled with grace, and here a pledge of future glory is given, when we shall feast at that table where you reign with all your saints for ever. **Amen**

### **The Blessing**

God the Father, by whose glory Christ was raised from the dead, strengthen you to walk with him in his risen life; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among *you*, and remain with *you* always. **Amen.**