

Sunday June 21, 2020
Father's Day

Ephesians 5:3-20

But fornication and impurity of any kind, or greed,
must not even be mentioned among you,
as is proper among the saints.
Entirely out of place is obscene, silly, and vulgar talk;
but instead, let there be thanksgiving.
Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person,
or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater),
has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.
Let no one deceive you with empty words,
for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient.
Therefore do not be associated with them.
For once you were darkness,
but now in the Lord you are light.
Live as children of light —
for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good, right and true.
Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.
Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness,
but instead expose them.
For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly;
but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,
for everything visible is light.
Therefore it says, "Sleeper awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."
Be careful how you live,
not as unwise people but as wise,
making the most of your time,
because the days are evil.
So do not be foolish,
but understand what the will of the Lord is.
Do not get drunk with wine,
for that is debauchery;
but be filled with the Spirit,
as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves,
singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts,
giving thanks to God the Father at all times
and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let us pray:

Fill us with your Spirit.
Teach us to make melody to you, Lord in our hearts.
Fill us to overflowing with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
Allow our lives to be filled with thanksgiving to God at all times
and for all things in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

“Singing in the Spirit”

On this Father’s day, I remember one thing about my father, he had music in his soul. One of the first things he taught me was to whistle so that like him I could make music wherever I went. My father was a tenor and he sang in the church choir of every church we attended. He loved music and he loved to sing. One of his greatest joys was to stand around the piano and sing hymns. And he always had a song in his heart til the day he died. I also have a love of music. I am sure one of the aspects of my wife that I found very attractive was the fact that she was so musical. Music is an important expression of spirituality. To produce music is to worship God from your innermost being.

There is a connection between being filled with the Holy Spirit and music. As Paul pointed out to the church in Corinth long ago there is singing in the flesh and there is singing in the spirit. Singing in the flesh builds up the congregation, but singing in the Spirit builds up the soul. Singing in the Spirit roots out obscene, silly, and vulgar talk. Singing in the Spirit fills us with the light of Christ. Singing in the Spirit wakes us up from the dead and resurrects the will of God within our lives. Singing in the Spirit empowers us with the optimism that only thanksgiving can bring. Today I want us look at this aspect of being filled with the Holy Spirit.

We live in a vulgar age. Much of what goes on in our world should not even be mentioned among the saints. Our language tends towards the negative. We have forgotten the power of a positive confession. What I am talking about is not looking at the world through rose color glasses, but focusing on “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise,” we need to be focusing on these things. It is about the focus of our hearts and minds. If we focus on the negative all we see is the negative. Human beings seem to be able to focus their attention on one thing at a time. Multi-tasking is actually a myth. When we shift our attention away from the vulgar to the honorable work that God, we are moved to thanksgiving and praise, overwhelmed by the glory and greatness of what God is doing in the world. Our vulgar world shrinks to nothing in comparison.

When this world and its silly pettiness catches our attention we get sucked into the foolishness of the world. We start to fight among ourselves, and we forget who we are and stop acting like the God we serve. Instead of living within the kingdom of our God, we leave and join in the divisions of this world. We get tempted to join in the idolatress arguments causing their infighting. We start manifesting the works of the flesh that wars against the Spirit of God. We get distracted by the greed that causes racism, sexism, and other divisions. We forget that we don’t have to live like this, because our God does not. We do not have to live according to the flesh but can live within the Kingdom of God, back in the garden of God. But to do so we must disassociate from the vulgar ways of the world.

The focus of the kingdom of God is focused on loving the world back to health. God’s focus is not on division but a peace that surpasses worldly understanding. God’s focus is bringing joy to the broken hearted and encouraging kindness in the world. God’s kingdom is the peaceable kingdom and you can tell if you are dwelling there by the song in your heart. It feels so different from joining in the depressingly sad foolishness of this world. God has a better way and when you embrace it your heart will always sing, no matter how many times you return.

God’s spirit fills our souls with light. Again it changes our focus allowing us to see what is really going on in this world. The lies are revealed. Reality breaks through the dark clouds of conspiracy theories. Those who live in darkness are afraid of those who are different. They are afraid of change and new ways of understanding the world. They are afraid because they are not aware that they have absolutely nothing to fear. God’s first words to us are always the same. “Do not be afraid.” When we see people in the light of Christ we don’t need

to be afraid. When we see life in the light of Christ, we can see where we need to change, and comprehend new ideas that we may need to adapt. In the light of Christ we see others not as those who need to be put down, put in their place nor destroyed as our enemies, but as dear siblings to be embraced, assisted and helped in life's struggles. When we start to see the world in all of its dramatic goodness like God does, it takes our breath away. Life is such an amazing gift that it causes our hearts to sing a hallelujah chorus. Our joy unspeakable is hard to contain. When the veil of this world is lifted and the haze dissipates, and we see what God is really doing in the world; it sets us to dancing with joy because great is our God and greatly to be praised. God wants us to enjoy the world and the people in it as much as he does. God longs to see us grow in grace and the ability to accept others for who they are and for whom they shall become with us in their lives and them in ours.

Our spirits sing because we were once dead in our sins and there was no real life in us at all. We were like the zombie apocalypse looking for life in a world filled with death. But by the power of the resurrection of Jesus we have arisen from the dead and in is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us. The old us has passed away, and behold God has created all things new in Christ Jesus. This is true cause for every soul to sing. Every good and perfect gift comes from God, even us, and especially them. And we now are awake enough to see what God is doing in Christ Jesus in our world and in our time. God has not only set us free but God is setting others free. When we were just going through the motions of life, we had little purpose, mainly survival for us and our families. Some have even sacrificed their own families, so they could have what they thought they needed to survive. But in Christ the world is being turned upside down. We are no longer the center our reason for existence, Jesus is. Instead of continuing to be part of this dog eat dog world, we have woken up to the fact that God has a much different plan. Instead of harming, with Jesus we are healing. Instead of taking for ourselves, like those who raided food stores for all of their toilet paper, we are now looking for a multitude of ways to provide for the needs of others. When we look at the hungry masses, we hear Jesus say to us, his disciples, you go on and feed them. Jesus is with us to help meet their needs and help make their lives better. As we follow Christ we give up our racist thinking and take up a more universal kind of thinking. It is no longer about what is best for me and mine, but what is best for all of us, especially those left out, and often left behind. We seek out the bullied so that they don't have to stand alone, so they will always know that Jesus cares about what they are going through. They may not see him yet, but we do, and Christ is with them to receive every taunt, every kick and punch. We know that Christ hears every suicidal prayer. We are awake and living in God's kingdom, and we are walking in the Son light. And there is no better feeling in the world than saving another soul from their torment. There is no better feeling than to speak the truth of God's love and grace, when others are seeking to drown you out with words of hate and cries for death. Our Spirits sing before God because we are fully alive and serve a risen Savior whose in the world today and feel invincible. If God is for us who can stand against us!

Our spirits cannot help but sing because of the optimism that floods our souls because of our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Our cup is not half empty nor is it half full, it is filled, pressed down and overflowing. Blessed assurance Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchased of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood. This is my story, this is my song praising my Savior all the day long. This is my story, this is my song praising me Savior all the day long.

The apostle Paul often got excited about the prospects for suffering with Jesus. He would say "count it all joy". He saw it not as a disaster, but as something exciting, as a wonderful gift from God. Why such joy? Because time and time again Paul was gifted with the opportunity to see what God can do. God does great things all the time, but most of the times we aren't paying attention. But when you are at the end of your rope and you have no where to turn, Paul noticed that he was not alone. God was there. And to experience that was beyond wonderful. He proclaimed: "We were afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies."

No matter what happens in life we get the joy of carrying in our bodies, Jesus, for all the world to see. We get to be crucified with Christ for the needs of others. We get to help amplify God's grace and reveal his presence for all to see. It is exciting. No matter what, we get a chance to glorify God in our bodies. If we live, God will be glorified and if we die God will be glorified. We cannot lose, because the God we serve cannot lose. This is what made Paul sing. This same Spirit causes our hearts to sing with the praises of God.

This is what it is like to be filled with the Spirit of God. When you need a boost in your spirit, sing. Sing a Psalm. Echo the cries of David's heart, a heart that was so close to the heart of God. Sing one of the great hymns of the church for they hold the deep theological teaching of the church. Sing your own spirit song; just let it flow from deep in your soul. "Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament! Praise him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his surpassing greatness! Praise him with the trumpet sound: praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with clanging cymbals; praise him with loud crashing cymbals! Let everything that breathes praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

Let us pray:

Thank you for Valley Forge United Methodist Church.

Thank you for all the lives they touch with their love and kindness.

Thank you for this pandemic and the opportunities you give to us to be your presence to those afraid.

Thank you for this racial unrest, use it to bring healing, use it to bring change.

Thank you Creator God, for just being you, and for your sacrificial Son, Jesus, and for your Holy Spirit who dances and sings wondrously in our hearts, may it be always. Amen.

I praise God that you joined with us today.

I praise God that you are sharing your prayer requests with each other.

I praise God that you have chosen to share your tithes and offerings and mailed them to the office.

I praise God for the ministry of fatherhood and all the blessings given and received.

I praise God for our Bible study and this last opportunity to share together before the change in pastors.

Now may the One who dwells in the praises of his people,
The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit
cause your hearts to sing as you live a life of joy
now and always. Amen.