**Lesson 13: Let There Be Joy in the Church!**

Text: Philippians 4:1-5

**Introduction**

It has been said, “To live above with saints we love, that will be glory. To live below with saints we know, now that’s a different story.” Citizens of heaven may have problems with fellow citizens while living on earth. The flesh gets in the way of the best of relationships! Our names are written in the book of life. We look forward to the Lord’s return. Still, we all have moments when we are not living as citizens of heaven. Paul wrote to help the Philippian believers restore their unity in Christ. There was an issue between two ladies within the church family. Paul exhorted them to get it right so that joy could continue in the church. “It is inconsistent for two Christians to be at variance when they are in Christ” (King James Bible Commentary). As issues arise within our church family, let’s follow the biblical admonition to resolve our differences in the spirit and gentleness of Christ.

1. Church should be a place of joy.
   1. We have an overabundance of reasons to have joy: our sins are forgiven, we have a home in heaven, the Savior walks with us every step of the way, etc.
   2. It is sad when people come to church expecting to find joy, only to find discontentment and bickering.
      1. The lost are surrounded by people who have a bad spirit every day. They ought to be able to come to a church service and find people who are genuinely joyful.
      2. We want young people to love church. They are bombarded with commercials and movies that portray the “fun” they could have in the world. It is counterproductive if they come to church and find people with long, sad faces. Of which do you think they would want to be a part?
   3. Our weekly church services should be times of great joy. This will occur as we find our joy in the Lord throughout the week and come prepared to share that joy with others.
   4. Why did Paul rejoice in the church? Pastor Ezequiel Salazar offered these reasons:
      1. Paul rejoiced in the church because he prayed for the church. When we pray for each other, it is a joy to be with each other. (1:4)
      2. He rejoiced in the church because of the relationships in the church. (1:5)
      3. He rejoiced in the church because he was not looking just at who they were, but who God was making them to be. (1:6)
      4. He rejoiced in the church because they were partakers in the ministry. (1:7)
      5. He rejoiced in the church because he loved the church. (1:8, 4:1a)
         1. He considered them family members (*my brethren*).
         2. They were *dearly beloved* and *longed for.* He wanted to be with them.
         3. They were his *joy* and *crown* since he had the privilege of leading them to Christ.
   5. Paul exhorted them to be steadfast as a joyful church since they were waiting for the Lord’s return. (4:1b)
2. Unfortunately, church can be a place of contention.
   1. There was a problem between Euodias and Syntyche. (v. 2a)
      1. We are not informed as to the cause of their contention.
      2. We do know these ladies were saved. Their names were in the book of life (4:3).
      3. They had been a tremendous help to Paul during his time in Philippi. He said they *labored with* him in the gospel ministry. This indicates that they cared about the work of the Lord and were faithfully involved.
      4. They had been pulling together, but somewhere along the way they started pulling apart. Instead of working together, they were working against each other.
      5. Their bickering was affecting the life of the church. Others were potentially being pulled into the situation. The joy of the church was jeopardized.
      6. Paul exhorted them to make things right.
   2. What happened between these ladies? Perhaps ambition for prominence got in the way. Perhaps one hurt the other’s feelings. There are many situations that can cause strife between friends and fellow church members. We are all prone to operate in the flesh rather than in the spirit. Somewhere pride and stubbornness drove a wedge between these ladies and hindered the work of the gospel.
   3. The solution for the disunity was to return to a place of having the same mind in the Lord. (v. 2b) No doubt they had their own mind on whatever situation created the problem between them. Paul exhorted them to set their way of thinking aside and to return to Christ’s way of thinking.
   4. They would need help in resolving matters. (v. 3) Paul addressed an unnamed recipient to *help* or assist them to make things right.
   5. Instead of bickering, they were to rejoice in the Lord. (v. 4)
   6. As members of the same church, they should not be known for their squabbles. Rather, they should be known for their *moderation*. This means that they were to be gracious and forbearing. Gentleness and kindness should be their trademark.
   7. Why should they forgive each other and return to a healthy relationship? Time is short! The Lord is at hand! Jesus could return any day!
3. Central Idea: Paul exhorted the Philippian believers to reconcile their differences because their church ought to be known as a joyful place to wait for the Lord’s return.
4. Application: We should reconcile differences as they arise because our church ought to be known as a joyful place to wait for the Lord’s return.
   1. Hillcrest Baptist Church can continue to be known as a joyful church as long as we treat each other with kindness.
   2. Is there a church family member with whom you need to reconcile? Be of the same mind in Christ. Humble yourself to make things right with your brother or sister. You don’t have to have your way. Let’s make sure Christ is having His way.
   3. Are you known for moderation or agitation? Make sure the gentleness of Christ is operating in your life.

**Conclusion**

Joy is produced when we joyfully get along in the body of Christ. Differences are going to occur. Pride and stubbornness can stand in the way of reconciliation. Christ deserves better! The work of the gospel necessitates cooperation! Let there be joy in the church by finding your joy in Christ!