

“Joyously Ordinary” A sermon by Lee Ireland  
Cathedral City Community Presbyterian Church  
October 15, 2017 Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Philippians 4:1-9

Let us pray together: **Open our eyes to see your Spirit in our life. Open our hearts to receive the blessings you send each day. Guide us with your wisdom so that through us Christ may walk on the earth once again. Amen.**

How many days until our church’s community Thanksgiving meal, the meal we share together the Sunday before Thanksgiving? This year that meal is on November 19<sup>th</sup>, a little over a month away. Thanksgiving starts the church season of Advent leading to the joyous celebration of Christmas! Christmas, what a wonderfully rich time in our church year when we celebrate the birth of our savior Jesus Christ.

Today is the 19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. Pentecost is the day we celebrate God sending the Holy Spirit to strengthen and guide each of us as Jesus’ followers. Pentecost, with its festive red banners and bright colors happened 19 Sundays ago and is a distant memory for most of us.

Why am I telling you all this information about the church year? Pentecost past and Christmas yet to come? Do any of you remember what this time in the year is called? Yes, ordinary time. Ordinary time is the largest block of time in the church calendar. And ordinary time makes up the largest block of time in your life and my life. Yes, we have high points in our lives, but in between those times life goes on as usual with nothing special to distinguish one week from another.

Today’s scripture reading from Philippians is on the church calendar to be read during the time between Pentecost and Christmas, during ordinary time. Perhaps that’s a good thing because the scripture reminds us that the ordinary things we do all year long aren’t really that ordinary when you think about it. All year long we have the joy of serving God, of praying, of letting our gentleness be known to everyone.

The color for Pentecost? Red. The color for Advent and Christmas? Blue for Advent and White for Christmas? The color for Ordinary time? Green. Green reminds us of life and growth - the green grass, the leaves on a tree, the green figs on our trees outside on the church grounds – figs that will eventually grow to be sweet. Green, the color of the season of Ordinary time, also reminds us as a congregation that this is a time for us to grow in our Christian lives.

Let me read again the delightful words Paul writes: **Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**

Rejoice in the Lord! Perhaps there are days that you don’t feel like rejoicing, life seems so ordinary. But is your life really that ordinary? Stop for a moment and think about the confidence that comes from knowing the Lord. No, your life and my life are not ordinary!

Remember that nothing can separate us from the Love of God in Jesus Christ. That is cause for joy.

Joy also comes from being 'in the Lord' as Paul writes. This means we know Jesus and our very being is centered on him and living as he lived and serving as he served others. Susan Eastman compared 'being in the lord' to "our constant movement on the surface of the earth; we are held fast by gravity at the center yet simultaneously spinning at tremendous speed, constantly in motion yet constantly at rest. Without this center of gravity, this grounding in the settled presence of Christ among us, the depiction of the life of faith as a race quickly becomes frenetic and destructive." (Susan Eastman, 2011, [www.workingpreach.org](http://www.workingpreach.org))

Paul tells the Philippians and us to pray about everything. We are to bring everything to God in prayer. No matter how trivial it may seem or how impossible the task, we are to take it to the Lord in prayer. We cannot be joyful if we are anxious or worried. Hiding our worry with a smile only make it worse. Christ will meet us in that place of worry if we only share our concerns with him in prayer. Jesus knows our worries because he experienced the depths of human despair on the cross. As Paul writes, **but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.**

One of the aspects of this scripture that our society may not readily grasp is that joy is communal. Our culture tends to think of faith as personal - my faith. But that concept would be foreign to Paul. Paul is writing to the church at Philippi. He's not writing to an individual there. He writes to "**my sisters and brothers, whom I love.**" He's writing to encourage the whole church. Faith for Paul, and for us, is about growing together as a community, about the joy of working together. Joy comes from helping each other, serving each other, praying for each other. And that is something I see at this church often!

I take great joy in this congregation. I brag about all you do at Presbytery meetings. If I were writing a letter like Paul's letter to the Philippians, I'd be praising you for wonderful things to you do serve each other and the Lord. There is joy when we gather. There's nothing ordinary about our worship. It's joy-filled! Each of you has a deep personal faith, but each of you also shares in the faith and joy of this community by praying for each other, by doing good works, by loving each other, caring for each other. I see you caring for others all the time.

We all need a periodic reminder that our ordinary lives are not all that ordinary; that time is not ordinary. We need to be reminded to rejoice in the Lord. We forget to celebrate that we are forgiven. We may complain that we can't do all we'd like to do instead of celebrating the things the Holy Spirit has given us the strength to do. When you stop and think about it, we have much to rejoice in – day in and day out!

I close the sermon today challenging you with Paul's words: **Finally, beloved, 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, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.**

Words to live by both as individuals and as a community.