

Hey everyone-

I'm excited that I get to be with all of you as we look at the last week in the series we called "To live is Christ".

Over the last four weeks we have looked at the book of Philippians...

We finish today with some thoughts out of Philippians 4.

Specifically we will focus on Paul's statement "I have learned the secret of being content."

Now this weekend is special for many reasons- we have a child dedication event tomorrow at 4 where 12 children will be dedicated to God, and tomorrow starts the season of Advent....which leads to the SEASON of Christmas.

So I think this is a perfect time to think about what does contentment mean?

We finish up a holiday weekend where many of us had a day or two off . Hopefully it was a time remember and Give Thanks for who God is and all He has done....

I hope you enjoyed your Thanksgiving.

I had many moments of feelings content this year.

Last year my family and most of southern New Hampshire did not have power for Thanksgiving or a few days after. My husband saved the day when he smoked our turkey outside in the snow in his smoker. We cooked all the sides in crockpots and in the microwave. We had a generator so we had lights but it was a different kind of thanksgiving.

This year we not only had power...the weather was beautiful. It was easy to do some shopping and hang our lights.

Friday night I was on our porch looking at the pretty lights so content.

My girls are getting older, so whenever we are all together, I am thankful.

By Friday night we had enjoyed many meals with family, decorated gingerbread houses and already watched a Christmas special. I was feeling content.

But if you have been part of women's harbor and studied the book "unglued by Lisa Tyrkhurst" you know that feelings are indicators but they're not truth.

When Paul speaks of contentment – we need to understand that contentment comes only from Christ.

This weekend- we step into the season of Advent and prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ.

And my questions for you today are

1.Are you content?

Why do we need to be content?

God, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you."
- Augustine

Do we find our rest in Christ alone or do we allow the problems of life will keep us from feeling content?
Can we let God be God and be like the birds of the air and the flowers of the field that Jesus spoke about? Do we believe that God loves us and He cares for us. Can we say with confidence to Live is Christ?

I think most of us are not content.

In fact, I think the advertisers of the world have figured out how to make this season... the season of being not content.

When we find ourselves going online or going into stores-they will show us many things we didn't even know we needed.

In fact, I think another way to describe this season if you were to look at the Ad's on TV and sent to our home ...is the season of discontent. It is month when we, and our children, realize all we do not have.

Does anyone else have the problem I have...I can go into a Target to buy a gallon of milk feeling content and leave with a carriage full of things I did not know I needed?

I am amazed how quickly and how often I forget the secret of being content.

So let's take some time today and think about what does it mean to be content. I think one word to summarize content is "Enough"... Earlier Ali read to us a passage from the book of Philippians chapter 4.

- Philippians is called the book of joy.
- The amazing part is that Philippians was written by Paul who wrote these words while he was in prison!
- Jeff and John have done a great job bringing this book to life and over the last 4 weeks they taught us...

The apostle Paul wrote over half of the New Testament Scriptures.

He was a scholar. A thinker who communicated principles of doctrine and discipleship for the church.

Paul was a missionary, planting churches throughout the Mediterranean ..including on at Philippi. He had written them a letter that today we read as the book of Philippians. As Jeff told us, Paul was so relentless in his desire to see people transformed by the love of Jesus that he was willing to endure intense opposition. Paul was beaten for his faith, imprisoned, shipwrecked and was even stoned and left for dead.

When Chapter 4 was read today, you may have thought as I thought-this one chapter is filled a lot of truth. Truth that could change our hearts and our lives if we could do what James tells us in the book of James...do not just hear the word, do it.

I think each thought in Philippians 4 could be its own sermon, so today we will focus on just one thought from Philippians 4-

I hope you leave today knowing that Christ made you, loves you and has a great plan for your life. Because Contentment comes from Christ. There is no purchase, or vacation and or relationship with any person that will fill the hole in our soul that can only be filled by the love of Christ.

A few weeks ago, I began my 13th year of being on staff as Children's Pastor.

Before he left, Jed Mullenix – our previous senior pastor encouraged me to take a week off.

I had so much hope in my vacation. I did a lot of fun things...I rested, I ran my first 5K, I went away with my husband to celebrate our 20th anniversary and I went a concert to see Casting Crowns, a Christian music group. At the end of the week, my soul had not found the contentment I thought I would find.

I returned to Harbor on a Saturday night...and it took until Sunday afternoon for my joy to fully return the way I thought it would have with a week off.

Looking back-I think I needed rest and fun and people and a vacation. But more than that- I needed Jesus.

When I came to Harbor that weekend, at each service I saw God moving in the lives of people in our community. That Sunday night our Ministry Director and Elder team met. God is moving here and seeing His hand in the lives of many people gave my soul a sense of being content.

I had been studying all of Philippians this Fall. I was surprised that when I went to see Casting Crowns that as they were sharing the scripture that inspired their music, the book of Philippians inspired much of it.

I have loved the music of Casting Crowns for over 10 years...what I love most is that Sunday- Wednesday they serve in their local church, Wed night they do a Bible study together and then tour Thursday- Sat.

The truth they learn from teaching scripture to teens become the songs they record.

I was at the concert on Thursday night. I was feeling tired, worn and my soul was feeling dry. They sang one of my favorite songs. It is out of the gospel of John- it is about the woman at the well....and a favorite lyric is

“all who thirst will find what their soul longs for....”

As they spoke, God reminded me- as He always does- the message I am sharing with all of you is first to me.

The concert tour was called Thrive and Mark Hall the leader of Casting Crown wanted to give a visual of how we thrive. I think another phrase for Thrive- is “be content”...

He spoke of a tree he had recently seen. This tree was planted by water and the roots of this tree went deep.

Not this was not just any tree... this tree was hundreds of years old. It was so large that if you took a picture you had to stand football fields away...and the normal sized trees around it would look like bushes.

The tree grew so large because its roots ran so deep into the living water of the two rivers it was planted by.

So how do we find a way for our roots to grow deep into the truth of who God is and what He says?

When the storms of life come, how do we- like Paul in a prison cell, find a way to believe the truth and not rely on our feelings?

My years in CM have allowed me to learn scripture set to song. I began to prepare for this message knowing that most of Philippians 4 is in my heart.

I think one way for our roots to run deep is to memorize passages of scripture. Many songs we sing here are from scripture and as we sing the words, we affirm the truth of the scripture they are based on.

Phil 4: 4 is a verse I learned in Sunday school long ago. We actually sang it a round, remember those....the first group would start “Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice....they would keep singing and the next group would begin.

I was very familiar with those words that start the passage I will be talking about today....but I am not sure I ever thought about it.

What does it mean to rejoice IN THE LORD? If this passage is familiar to you- have you wondered what does that mean and why does Paul say “Rejoice in the Lord” twice?

Maybe the people in Philippi were like how you and I can be....Paul reminds us to rejoice in the Lord.... And we have 100 reasons why we can't....

I am tired, in need of more health, more money, more friends, less free time, more free time, a vision for my future, a husband, a family, and a vacation

When that happens then I can rejoice...

Paul says- rejoice in the Lord Always, not waiting until all of life is in place...AGAIN I say rejoice!

But Paul reminds us there is no excuse...rejoice- It says in The Message version of this verse.

4-5 Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, *revel* in him!

How can I do this....I think Nehemiah sheds light on how in pain, and exhaustion and in discomfort or agony...we can rejoice... Nehemiah 8:10

reminds us that The Joy of the Lord is our strength.

It is His joy...we can ask for it. So that is what I have been doing. Before I even put my feet on the ground, I am asking God for His joy. To Live is Christ!

For many of us, what is taking the joy from our lives is our anxiety. Fearing what will come...even though we know we are commanded not to fear . We know that God is with us...it is why we celebrate this season- Immanuel- God, you are with me

Contentment Comes from Christ.

Christ is Lord and King. He is God and I am not.

It matters how we use our minds and what we think about. . We can worry- or we can rest- knowing God is on the throne working all things for our good, but even more importantly- FOR HIS GLORY.

4 years ago in March I went to see Casting Crowns. They were playing in the Lowell auditorium, just like they did a few weeks ago.

Throughout the concert my phone kept buzzing and by intermission, my niece Leah had been born.

I was at the concert with some of my best friends. We all went to the same church, where I was the Children's Pastor. I had served there for 9 years. It was the only church my girls had known. I did not know that night- what God already knew. I would soon be part of the team at Harbor.

Later that week, Jed would go visit my sister, and meet my new niece. We would have a conversations that would lead me to Harbor.

I had no idea how my life was about to change that night, but 8 weeks later I would be on staff here.

But God knew.

The lead singer from Casting Crowns shared a story behind the song "Already There". He said as a child he liked to go to the top of the highest building in town. From that point he could see the start and end of a parade at the same time.

As an adult, that Birdseye view of the parade gave him confidence in God- because God can see the start and end of our liveshe is already there.

When we know that and believe that He is good...He is for us and for His glory... we *can* rejoice and we can also live in peace. We have learned the secret of being content. Christ is with us! God is on the throne.

But when we lose that perspective, and try to help God be God...by reminding him of all the bad that could happen...we become full of anxiety... That is why Paul tells us DO NOT Be Anxious....it is a command....just like the command we see most often in scripture- Do not be afraid.

Anxiety and fear- they can hit us out of nowhere.. can't they? One moment our child is fine, the next there is a fever with no explanation...one Friday you have a job, Monday you do not....Sunday you are in love, Thursday they are gone..

There was a saying in the 90's...don't sweat the small stuff...and from there the saying became...it is all small stuff.

That is not true...your baby in the hospital is not small stuff, not having money to pay rent is not small stuff...finding a lump is not small stuff..

But it also does not need to lead to anxiety.

God's promise is He is with us....that is what Jesus' name Immanuel means. In Paul reminds us

(Phil 4:6-7 Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

Christ displaces worry.....can you picture it?

A tub filled to the brim with warm water- then you put your child in the tub, and water spills onto the floor....their body has displaced the water.

If today your heart is filled with worry and anxiety...know that when you offer a sacrifice of praise and fill your heart with thanksgiving filled prayers... the peace of God- more that we can understand- will displace the worry.

How do we get there? I think it comes down to what do we focus on. I love Harbor. I love the peace many of us feel when we are in this place. I think we learn the meaning of being contentment when we are here- because we think about God here, His love, His provision, His authority. Contentment is a truth-not a feeling. Paul knew this.

There are 168 hours in a week, 672 in a month. If we focus on the Sovereignty of God for only 3-4 hours a month, we know that is not enough to sustain us.

In September, I went to the- Q conference (describe)

DR Caroline Leaf- gave a short talk on what we think about and why it matters. She also used Trees as an example.

On one side of her table was a healthy plant, it represented a healthy mind...the other was brown and dying,, and represented a toxic mind. She said her research was spent finding out if what we think about matters. It does. Our mind is affected by thoughts.

As a follower of Christ, she believes the mind and brain are a different as our body and soul...that there is a spiritual aspect to our mind.

She said many of the illnesses that plague us today are a direct result of our thought life. What we think about affects us physically and emotionally, and spiritually.

She said-The average person has over 30,000 thoughts a day.
And most have an epidemic of toxic emotional thoughts.

She believes that through an uncontrolled thought life, we can make ourselves sick!

Her research shows that fear triggers more than 1,400 known physical and chemical responses and there are INTELLECTUAL and MEDICAL reasons to FORGIVE!

Medical research increasingly points to the fact that thinking and consciously controlling your thought life is one of the best ways of detoxing your brain. It allows you to get rid of those toxic thoughts and emotions that can consume and control your mind.

Change in your thinking is essential. Consciously controlling your thought life means not letting thoughts rampage through your mind. It means learning to engage interactively with every single thought that you have, and to analyze it before you decide either to accept or reject it- Dr. Caroline Leaf

So how do we get rid of toxic thoughts and change our thinking? Paul tells us in verses 8 and 9

Phil 4:8 Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse.

What did you think about this week? Some of us need to think true and gracious words about ourselves. We are who Jesus says we are. Others of us need to stop thinking the worst false thoughts about how life will be. God is control.

Facebook is a gift and a curse for me. I love seeing pictures, hearing stories and connecting with people. But as my husband will tell you if you ask him...I spend WAY too much time on it!!

But FB can also be a curse if we let the version of life people put on Fb cause us to stop being content with the life we have.

FB can become one way to envy or covet the lives that other people seem to live...even though we know that no one lives a life that is perfect.

Truth says

God is in me and with me. He wants to turn my thoughts and my words and my actions towards Him. I have the choice, but He offers me His power.

When I do not think about the right, good, praise worthy things- I allow worry and anxiety to rule my mind, and I forget to allow Christ to rule and reign in me

If contentment is found in Christ alone I must displace the thoughts that keep me from peace.

The final verses we will look at today are Phil.4:9-14

Paul says in verse 9- (THE MESSAGE Phil. 4:9)

Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies.

Putting into practice, is what we call spiritual disciplines. Things we do over and over. We come each week to worship and to hear scripture- we might take notes, but how do we put it into practice. What is the next step for living a life that has faith that God is in fact working all things together?

One thing I think that has helped me is to write down what I am learning from God, then taking the time to read and remember how faithful He is.

I think that is what the Bible is...God's story of His faithfulness.

And finally, we see Paul's words that formed the basis of our time together today.

Phil 4:10-14 I'm glad in God, far happier than you would ever guess— I don't have a sense of needing anything personally.

I've learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances. I'm just as happy with little as with much, **with much as with little**. I've found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty.

The Gospel is that- I can do everything...through Christ who gives me strength....

It is through Christ alone...not me trying in my own strength. .

I am a sinner in need of a Savior- Christ died and rose again to pay the price for my sin.

When I believe this, like Paul, I am able to be content.

Christ is all I need.

Paul is saying that in need or with much, He knows that Secret- Christ in Him is his hope.

In prison and in chains Paul tells the people he cares so much about- It is well with his soul- he is ok..

He knows that to Live is Christ and to die is gain

He is aware that this community of believers in Philippi, care for him-

He tells them he is happy knowing that that they pray for him and think about him.

Paul is content- Christ in Him allows him to say-

"I have learned what it is to be in need, I have learned what is to have plenty- I have learned the secret of being content."

Both are hard... too little money, too little time and not enough health... often these needs lead us to God.

But if we have too much we often forget about God and become overwhelmed by the money and resources entrusted to us.

The secret of being content is knowing that
Whatever I have, wherever I am, Christ is with me-
He is enough!
Live TODAY knowing that to live is Christ.
It is done in Him and through Him.

Together we have sang "TO LIVE IS CHRIST" many times over the last few weeks, and we will sing it once more today.

The words give us confidence to believe that Contentment comes from Christ.
Jesus is all I need...

Let it be Jesus
The first name that I call
God, I breathe Your name

Should I ever be abandoned
or acclaimed ...AS PAUL WOULD SAY...in little or in much
Should I ever be surrounded
By the fire and the flame

There's name I will remember
There's a name I will proclaim
Let it be Jesus

So my hope for all of us this is that we live a life where our roots dig deep.

We thrive and are content because of Who God is and what He has done.

Having lived a perfect life, Christ died upon that cross for all my thoughts, MY words and MY ACTIONS that ARE contrary to his will...all my sin was paid in full with His blood.

He paid that price to reconcile us to himself

GOD desires to live in us and with us. Immanuel- GOD IS WITH US!

We can live knowing who we are- the beloved children of the most high God....and know who He is...our loving Father, Creator of the Universe, who knows us and loves us.

This week as we wake up- we know we can say "Jesus- be my strength" before our feet even touch the floor.

If we wake up in the middle of the night with anxious thoughts -. We know that Psalm 23 REMINDS US we do not need to “ fear ..evil- for (God) you are with me”

As we leave and start another week, Let's choose to
Live with Christ as Lord of our lives.

Knowing that contentment will never come from any thing or any new relationship. Contentment is not found in a vacation or in anything other than Christ.

Contentment Comes from Christ
Will you pray with me..

Lord, this week..You have spoken a song into my heart
And now I come and I confess
That I try to find contentment, joy and rest outside of you

Forgive me....help me to rest in you.
Lord, I need you...I thank you that you are Immanuel. You are with me and you are with us.