

To Live is Christ, To Die is Gain

May 12, 2019

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus,
To SERVE those God has placed in our path.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: Psalm 73:23-26

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship)

Read together Psalm 73:23-26.

Icebreaker

Share your favorite childhood meal.

Text for Discussion: Philippians 1:12-26

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

“Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner.” This statement ushers each of us into life as a Christian. And the more we experience the love of Jesus, the more we will say, “To live is Christ, and to die is gain.” But how do we get to a place where we can wholeheartedly say this? Where we can give thanks and be joyful in every situation? Where our hearts are set on Heaven while still committed to the fruitful labor our Father has placed before us today?

Death will bring us face to face with Jesus. At last, we will be home. This knowledge robs death of its terror. Christ’s love becomes our bedrock. Nothing else matters; no other love compares. Our souls find rest knowing He is our deliverer and redeemer, our righteousness and advocate. Wherever we go, He is with us – loving us more perfectly and completely than we ever dared hope.

God understands exactly who we are, what we’re going through, and what we need. Everything He allows is therefore meant to wean us from the things of this world. As we loosen our grip on the things that were never going to give us joy, we’ll come to realize: the only thing that can never be taken from us is Christ. This truth will give us peace, contentment and even joy in the most trying of circumstances. For our God is with us. Always.

This gives us enormous confidence in God’s sovereignty. As J.A. Motyer wrote, “The pressures of life are the hands of the potter who is also our Father. The fires of life are those of the refiner. He does not abandon the process of completing [us]. Nor is God ever knocked off course by the malpractice of evil people or the weaknesses of good ones.” Our Father’s purposes cannot fail.

What’s more, when this joy takes hold in our lives, the hardships we face will serve the advancement of the Gospel. Those who see our reliance on the Lord will be emboldened and encouraged. This is why Paul’s letter – though written from prison when his survival was in doubt – is a call to joy. He writes to strengthen the faith and encourage other followers of Christ, just as Pastor Wang Yi wrote only a few months ago. And so we find hope and encouragement in their words, remembering that even though we are weak, we can firmly believe in the promise of the Gospel. For to live is Christ, and so we place our absolute confidence in Him.

If your CG would like to read Pastor Wang Yi's letter in full, you can find a copy here: (<https://tinyurl.com/faithfuldisobedience>).

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

What is the source of Paul's bold confidence and joy in this passage?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- What is the source of Paul's bold confidence and joy in this passage?
 - What does he have?
 - What does he know?
- What does Paul want more than anything else?
 - What else does he want?
 - What would he never lose?
- What does a life that believes "to live is Christ" look like?
 - How do you know when you are in the presence of one who lives like this?
- Explain what "to die is gain" means.
 - What questions do you have about this phrase?
- How do we learn to say "To live is Christ, to die is gain"?
 - What do you think would move you toward saying this with the joy and confidence of Paul?
- How does this passage encourage your faith?
 - How does it encourage you to tell others about your faith in Christ?

Prayer

This week continue to pray Philippians 1:9-11 for leaders, pastors, church staff and the persecuted Christians in the world.

Experiment of the Month

(A suggestion for engagement in following the way of Jesus this week)

Gratitude Journal - Take a few moments at the end of each day to recall where you saw God's gracious activity in your life and thank Him. This is an ancient and simple daily method of helping you call to mind what you have seen, heard, tasted, and touched of God in the day. A Gratitude Journal helps you express thanksgiving to God and increase your capacity for joy as you jot a few things down each day. (There are some gratitude journal apps you may wish to download if you prefer.)

Missional Experiment of the Month:

Depression, sadness, and anxiety are real parts of the Christian and human experience – and we need to make space for real struggle in our worship, in our community and in our friendships. The Bible invites us to admit that life is hard – it's not sin to be discouraged, it's not a failure of faith. It is a far greater witness to the watching world, far more glorifying to God to admit your need and brokenness than to portray a false sense of put-togetherness. Over the next month be intentional about being authentic as a witness to who Christ is, our ever-present, sympathizing, helping, and forgiving Savior. Share stories with your Community Group.