

Haverhill Methodist Church – Worship at Home  
Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April 2021

Welcome Message – Revd. Peter Goodhall

Today we are pleased to welcome our friend Henry Wilson who brings us God's word. We pray: Almighty God and Father, help us to be still in your presence, that we may know ourselves to be your people, and you to be our God; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Hymn/Song

Prayer

God of heaven and earth, God of the sunrise and the sunset, God of the highest mountain and the deepest valley, hear our prayers as we come before your throne of glory. Declare your message to us today and grant us the courage to listen. May our listening turn to action. May our actions touch the hearts of those who need to hear your voice. We put our trust in you, knowing that it is well placed in your gentle and caring hands.

Living God in whom we live and move and have our being, the God who is made known in Christ Jesus, bless us one and all as we wait on you this day. Please remove from our minds and hearts whatever impediments hinder worship or dampen our joy.

Increase within us that holy longing for closeness, which can open our lives to fuller delight and to a deeper commitment.

In Jesus name, **Amen.**

Bible Reading

Philippians Chapter 1 verses 12-26

Hymn/Song

Sermon by Henry Wilson 'Jesus – Our Source of Joy'

A bit of the background (and mostly from the NIV Study Bible)

- Philippi - a Roman colony

- A place where retired officers might reside, they were given land
- Maybe people who were wealthy
- Likely that there was a lack of Jewish people as there are no OT quotes
- Founded by Paul and Timothy on their second missionary trip (Acts chapter 16)

It is primarily a letter of thanks for the gifts while Paul was imprisoned, most likely under house arrest in Rome. But a place where he was free to impart the gospel to whoever came to his home. Gifts were sent when they learned of his imprisonment.

The letter is:

- A report on his own circumstances
- An encouragement to stand firm in persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances
- To exhort them to humility and unity
- To commend his fellow workers, ie. Timothy and others
- To warn against legalists and libertines who might take them off course

The letter shows a strong and healthy (vigorous) type of Christian living

- Self-humbling
- Dogged determination (pressing on towards the goal)
- Lack of anxiety
- Ability to do all things

The letter is outstanding in its use of the word joy, in its various forms, no less than 16 times!

It also contains the most profound Christological passages in the NT, but for me it's the real joy, peace and contentment that comes across.

Joy - a feeling of great pleasure and happiness

- Something a bit more, it's deep down, it produces contentment

What gives you joy?

For me... (the obvious aside, like family and friends)

Photographs, they are so much more than that, they are precious memories

Seeing someone overcome – and living life to the full

New seedlings

Philippians 1:21 – that’s an amazing verse... imagine what things would look like if that was us nowadays

- It is like Paul has a ‘win-win’ attitude!
- Whatever happens to him doesn’t matter, as long as he has Christ
- Imagine living like this!
- And if I live brilliant, but if I die, even better!
- When Christ is your source and your goal, anything else, petty rivalries and insecurities are completely insignificant.
  
- Paul’s continual joy (even in prison) was because Christ was his source; his whole life!
- The most precious possession that Paul had was his relationship with Christ, both then and in the life to come.
- No wonder he wrote what he did in chapter 2 – “do nothing out of selfish ambition... consider others better than yourself...”
- And again in chapter 4; rejoice in the Lord always, I say it again it again – rejoice! Followed by the antidote to worry – pray!
- **To be content in whatever the circumstances** – now that’s special, when it’s not about ME anymore, not about US but about Christ, life takes on a new meaning

Charles my mentor, he speaks of finding ‘found opportunities’ once our original plans have not materialised. A bit like mine last spring when I was planning to do so much during my 3-month sabbatical. Instead of loads of busy-ness I spent lots of time resting and drawing closer to God. I could not have scripted it, it wasn’t what I wanted, but it was exactly what I needed!

I could have spent time moping, “woe is me”, “typical, I take 3 months and we go into lockdown...” or look for the ‘found opportunity’!

So as much as lockdown was restricting, lots of opportunities arose, all of which wouldn't have happened without the virus!

For example:

- Tillie's Bistro – with Angela at home in the dining room we put a few Christmas lights in the shed like building around the back (nicknamed the Tillie room) complete with seedlings and pretty much anything else – and that became our Friday night eating place. We loved it, we even use it to this day!
- VE Day street (on the bit of green outside our houses) party with our neighbours – we've got to know our neighbours; we know them all by name! We even did doorstep drinks and carols just before Christmas – it never would have happened without the virus!
- Having Angela's mother Eileen come and stay after contracting coronavirus. It was one of the most precious times we could ever have imagined and now since she died, even more so. Again, it never would have happened without the virus.

To conclude:

Jesus is the source of our joy

Found opportunities – making the most of them

Content in whatever the circumstances

"Christ Is Enough" (see the words below)

Hebrews 12:1-3 & Phil 4:10-13

**Christ is my reward** and all of my devotion

Now there's nothing in this world that could ever satisfy

Through every trial my soul will sing

No turning back, I've been set free

Christ is enough for me

Christ is enough for me

Everything I need is in You

Everything I need

Christ my all in all, the joy of my salvation

And this hope will never fail, heaven is our home

Through every storm, my soul will sing

Jesus is here, to God be the glory

I have decided to follow Jesus

No turning back

No turning back

The cross before me

The world behind me

No turning back

No turning back

Hymn/Song

### Prayers of Intercession

Living God, we have known your love and experienced your care and provision. We thank and praise you.

You call us to extend your love to the world around us—to care for others as deeply as we care for ourselves.

And so we bring the needs of our world before you now.

We pray for those who do not have what they need in order to survive;

those without enough food to eat, or shelter to keep them warm;

those without employment, or enough money to pay their bills;

those without access to medical care, or medicine to keep them healthy.

We pray for those who have more than enough to meet their needs,  
but who continue to feel empty inside;  
who struggle to find meaning and purpose in life,  
who try and hide the pain.

We pray for those who are struggling physically,  
who are battling life-threatening disease or injury,  
who are living with chronic pain, or facing death.

God of the first and the last, and all those in between,  
Your grace reaches out to all of us—  
life-long believers or newcomers alike.

You call us to live as citizens of heaven,  
to work together with one mind and one purpose,  
to reach out in love to those in need.

Strengthen us so that we might live in a manner worthy  
of the Good News we have received, offering our lives to the  
building up of Your upside-down kingdom, where the last are first,  
and the first are last, and there is grace enough for all.

In this week ahead, be at the centre of our lives.

Be our joy and may our joy overflow to those around us.

We ask these prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Unite your prayers with the whole church as you pray

The Lord's Prayer. 'Our Father...'

Hymn/Song

The Blessing

We offer our lives and our gifts to the Lord.

May God, who has begun a good work within you,  
continue that work until the day when Christ Jesus returns.

May your love overflow more and more;

May you continue to grow in knowledge and understanding,  
so that you can clearly discern what really matters, and so that you  
may stand pure and blameless before God on the day of Christ's  
return. The God who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.

**Amen.**

## Coffee Time Conversation

- What or who brings you joy?
- What 'chains' of adversity restrict you?
- What 'found opportunity' presents itself to you today?

## Suggested Hymns and Songs

### More Traditional Music:

Man of sorrows! What a name  
O love that wilt not let me go  
Will your anchor hold?

### More Contemporary Music:

Jesus be the centre  
Cornerstone  
You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace

Keep social distancing.  
Keep safe.  
Keep communicating.  
Keep celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord.  
God bless you and keep you until we meet again.  
My prayers are with you.

With love,

Peter