

Sunday, March 29, 2020

Turn off the outside “noise” for a couple of minutes and consider this message from God’s Word.
I am praying that it calms your spirit and encourages your heart.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9 (TNIV)

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS.

I will say it AGAIN: Rejoice!

⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all.
The Lord is near.

⁶ Do not be anxious about anything,
but in every situation,
by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God.

⁷ And the peace of God,
which transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

— PART 2 —

“Let your gentleness be evident to all.” — why is it so important that we be **gentle** men and women? The founder of Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia is a wise and godly mentor named James Houston. He once suggested to me that we should view everybody as “hospital cases” — since most of us are broken and bruised by life. We would then treat them with the gentleness and kindness they desperately need. Dr. Houston was once interviewed by a friend:

MHR: As I think back to that two-hour drive through the mountains to the airport last fall, I was struck by the fact that...**your words** — honest and piercing as they were — **were bathed in kindness.**

It seems that often when Christians attempt to ‘speak the truth in love,’ the element of kindness is lacking, and people end up feeling attacked and assaulted.

JH: **True kindness is ‘giving space’ for the uniqueness of the other. True gentleness is in the Spirit of Christ.**

MHR: Say more about that.

JH: Kindness is giving others territory in which to be safe. I have a text that rests above the head of the person sitting in the chair across from me when we talk together: ‘The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’ That’s the kindness of God. **The kindness of God is to give territory to others ‘to be,’ for God’s relationship with all his creatures is in love.**

MHR: Thus, the importance of one’s own self-awareness before God.

JH: Yes. And the model for that is the servant in John 13, who, knowing where he came from, and where he was going (the Father’s bosom), took the towel, and took the posture of a slave, to wash the disciples’ feet. These are all elements of divine kindness. . . . **I think true spiritual friendship is one of the most precarious and difficult fruits of human life. It indicates, therefore, how profoundly rooted we need to be in the love of God.**

ARAM HAROUTUNIAN, No One Closer: A Conversation with James Houston. *Mars Hill Review* 1.6 (Fall 1996) 51-66.

“The Lord is near.” — why do you think Paul brings this up at this particular point? Perhaps it’s because the fact that “our Lord is **near**” should radically shape the way we treat others. How could we treat anyone with an unkind and harsh spirit . . . when we know the Lord is very, very close to us?! Closer than the air we breathe. ***“Abba Father, would you please make your presence known to us right now!”***

And then we come to these two indispensable verses:

***⁶ Do not be anxious about anything,
but in every situation,
by prayer and petition,
with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God.
⁷ And the peace of God,
which transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

I love the way Eugene Peterson paraphrased this:

***“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.”***
PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 (The Message)

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So we cry out,

***“God, that’s exactly what we want!
Would you show us how to
“let petitions and praises shape our worries into prayers,
letting You know our concerns”?
We deeply long to experience “the peace of God.”
May “Christ displace worry at the center of our lives”!***

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May God’s serenity and peace be poured out on you today,

Pastor Doug

P.S. We would love to hear from you! How are you doing right now? And we would love to pray for you! Email us at info@bethanyonline.net

P.P.S. Keep checking this page — we will try to post fresh encouragement **every day** during this crisis!

P.P.P.S. And watch our **LIVE-STREAM Worship Service** this coming Sunday at 10:30 a.m. for more encouragement.