



“SEPARATE BUT TOGETHER!!”

- Our **mission** is to *Reach* people in the Name of Jesus; *Disciple* people in the Way of Jesus; *Empower* people in the Service of Jesus.
 - Our **method** is to ensure that everything we do is *Christ Centered; Word Focused; & Ministry Minded*
 - Our **message** is *the Gospel*.
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1 Thessalonians 2:17-20 (NIV)

"But, brothers and sisters, when we were orphaned by being separated from you for a short time (in person, not in thought), out of our intense longing we made every effort to see you. For we wanted to come to you—certainly I, Paul, did, again and again—but Satan blocked our way. For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy."

Prayer

"Father open my eyes, so I can see Your truth. Open my ears, so I can hear Your Voice. Open my mind, so I can understand Your Word. And open my heart, so I may receive all that You have for me, that is for me. In Jesus Name, AMEN!"

Thought:

While we most always read Scripture from within a particular context and moment in history, there are times in which it seems almost impossible to not read our present reality into a past moment. For example, when we read Paul's words about being separated from those he loves in person but not in heart, who in 2020 cannot relate to this sentiment?

I imagine we have all seen heartwarming images during this pandemic of loved ones who are separated in body, but creatively showing their love and affection for one another in heart. I think of families waving and holding up signs from outside the window of their loved one's nursing home, or the parade of cars driving past loved one's homes on their birthdays, graduations, anniversaries, etc. Even when we are forced apart, our hearts remain deeply connected with those we love.

Rightly understood, self-care is an important and even an essential part of human flourishing. We must learn to tend to God's renewing work inside of us as we are remade and reborn as children in His Kingdom; and yet, regardless of what we are often told, true joy and fulfillment is not found simply in your own self-satisfaction. There is a greater and deeper life that is only found when we give ourselves away for the good of others.

Joy is found when we invest in others and see them become the people they are meant to be. Though Paul had certainly been personally transformed by the love of God in Jesus, this was not his hope or joy. What was? Seeing that transformation in the lives of his friends. Their new life in Christ was his great joy and source of abiding hope, and it is meant to be ours as well!

In order to know the joy that Paul speaks of, you and I must be willing to first do the hard work of living and loving for the sake of others. What does it look like for you to truly give your life away, without expecting anything in return? It is so easy to live out of mixed motives, doing good for another yet still mindful of the benefit that comes back our way. Yet what a gift it would be to long to see someone face to face for no other reason than to see them living life as God made it to be lived, and that alone being for you and me a deep well of unspeakable joy!

In this time of quarantine and pandemic, make every effort stay connected in heart with your family, friends, loved ones, classmates, colleagues, neighbors, etc., even while disconnected in person.

Prayer of reflection you might pray this week: "Father, thank you that You are, "...not a God of disorder but of peace" (1 Corinthians 14:33 NIV) and that Your peace, "transcends all understanding, (and) will guard (our) hearts and (our) minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). Help us to stay connected in heart even when we are apart from those we love, praying for them, seeking their good in seeking Your joy and peace. This is my prayer in the matchless, wonderful and compassionate name of Jesus, Amen!"

May God continue to bless and protect you always!

Pastor King