

"But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss of the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me." Philippians 3:7-8, 12

Introduction

Questions to asked at your table:

- Describe something that brings you great joy
- As you think about your life and the world - what's one thing you're hopeful for?
- What are some of your most prized possessions?
- From your perspective why do we study the Bible?

Why Study the Bible?

Is there a difference between reading the news and reading a bible? How so/not?

- Why read the news?
- Why read the Bible?
- Matthew 7:24-27 –

Eugene Peterson writes: *"This may be the single most important thing to know as we come to read and study and believe these Holy Scriptures: this rich, alive, personally revealing God as experienced in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, personally addressing us in whatever circumstances we find ourselves, at whatever age we are, in whatever state we are – me, you, us. Christian reading is participatory reading, receiving the words in such a way that they become interior to our lives, the rhythms and images becoming practices of prayer, acts of obediences, ways of love."*ⁱ

A Piece of the Puzzle

The **mission** of Holy Cross Lutheran Church (HCLC) is...

We embody that mission best, when we

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All this matters for us here at HCLC because we are working to answer **who are we becoming.**

A Moment of Worship & Prayer

Psalm 119:41-48

St. Paul and the Church in Philippi

Before we can begin a study of Paul's letter to the Philippian Church, it's important to understand the unique relationship between St. Paul and the Jesus followers in Philippi.

- Acts 16:6-12 –
- Acts 20:6 –
- Acts 28:11ff –

The Church at Philippi was St. Paul's _____. He held a unique affection for them.

The Captivity Letters

St. Paul writes Philippians, along with three other letters, from Roman captivity (Acts 28:11ff), somewhere between AD 59-61.

These captivity letters are the fruit of St. Paul's imprisonment: the "...fullest and profoundest proclamation of the all-embracing significance of the Christ (letter to the Colossians) and of the nature of the church (letter to the Ephesians), a small but impressive record of how the Gospel can transfigure even the dark and sordid aspects of human life (Letter to Philemon), and a letter whose dominant note of **hopeful** and **expectant joy in the midst of suffering** has kept the church the hoping Advent church through the ages (Letter to the Philippians)."ⁱⁱ

The beauty of the captivity letters is even though St. Paul is captive, the Word of the Lord is _____!

A Last Word

Questions to Discuss at the table:

- In what ways does the message of Philippians (hopeful and expectant joy in the midst of suffering) speak to your world/life/context right now?
- Why does suffering tend to lay bare the things that really matter?
- What thing or part of your life would be difficult to “count as loss” for a fuller life in Christ?

For NEXT TIME: Chapter 1

ⁱ Peterson, Eugene *Eat this Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*, p.28

ⁱⁱ Franzmann, Rev. Dr. Martin H. *The Word of the Lord Grows*, 122