**To Live Is Christ**

**The Word**

Read together Philippians 1:12-26

**The Big Idea**

In this passage, Paul models a life lived exclusively for the sake of Christ. Though he faces challenging circumstances, he finds joy, freedom, and purpose in pursuing Christ in every circumstance.

**Questions for Discussion**

1. On Sunday we discussed how every person has to fill in the blank: “For me to live is \_\_\_\_.” As you consider that, what are one or two underlying motivations that drive you in your life? Or to put it another way, what are the deepest treasures or goals you’re always seeking?

2. As you consider how Paul responded to and walked through his various challenges (See Point II in the outline below for a reminder), what stood out to you most? What specifically about him do you most want to emulate?

3. Sunday’s message closed with the idea that living wholeheartedly for Jesus is actually a freer and more joyful way to live than the way most of us are living. Do you think that is actually true? In what ways do you think it’s true, and it what ways do you question whether that’s true?

**Digging Deeper: Sermon Outline**

I. For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain (v. 21)

A. Paul is explaining what gives his life meaning and joy, what drives and motivates him to live the way he lives, and what treasure he seeks in all circumstances

B. Every human being has to decide his/her answer to that question: What am I really living for? What treasure do I seek? What drives me to do what I do?

Examples: recognition, financial security, friends and family, being seen as attractive and desirable, winning, harmony, doing things right, helping others, expressing oneself,

 C. To live is Christ

 1. That means Paul lives to know Christ

 a. = the “surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”

b. That’s why to die is gain (because to die means to gain Christ in a more immediate way)

2. That also means Paul lives to make Christ known

a. That Christ would be “magnified” in my life (v. 20)

b. John Piper analogy. Paul wants to magnify Christ not the way a microscope magnifies but the way a telescope magnifies.

II. Consider how living to know Christ and make him known transforms Paul’s experience of his challenging circumstances.

 A. His physical circumstances (v. 12-14)

 1. Paul is stuck in prison and unable to travel and share the gospel abroad

2. But he rejoices because a) he is able to spread the gospel in prison (v. 13) and b) other Christians are inspired by his sacrifice to spread the gospel in Rome (v. 14)

3. For Paul, his circumstances were never a barrier to his deepest treasure and purpose (=Jesus). Both good and bad circumstances provide an opportunity for him to know Christ and make him known.

4. For us, oftentimes we experience circumstances as a barrier/obstacle to the thing we want, so tough circumstances can turn our internal world upside down.

 B. His relational circumstances (v. 15-18)

 1. There are egos and competitive spirits in the preaching of the gospel in Rome

it to him while he’s stuck

2. So often when our goal is recognition or winning, we play the comparison game and it isn’t healthy for our spirit.

3. But didn’t get caught up in any of those comparison games. He focused on the fact that the gospel of Jesus was being preached, and he rejoiced.

 C. His future circumstances (v. 19-26)

1. In his upcoming trial, rather than prioritizing making a defense of himself that gets him out of prison, he is prioritizing making sure the gospel gets a fair defense.

2. He believes he can magnify Jesus either in his life (being released for more fruitful ministry) or in his death (demonstrating to people that Jesus really is worth dying for).

3. So in the end, it’s a win-win for him whether he lives or dies. Selfishly, he’d prefer to die and be with Jesus, but he is convinced Jesus has more work for him on earth.

III. In all circumstances, Paul is living in freedom and joy

A. We are often filled with anxiety and fear because of the things we’ve identified as our greatest treasures.

B. Paul invites us into the freedom and joy of making Christ our deepest treasure.

C. The prayer of St. Patrick: As I arise today, may the strength of God pilot me, the power of God uphold me, the wisdom of God guide me. May the hand of God protect me, the way of God lie before me, the shield of God defend me. May Christ shield me today. Christ with me, Christ in me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit, Christ when I stand. Amen.