



August 12, 2020

LOOKING TO FAITH FROM SORROW

In the New Testament, the book of Philippians shines as one of the clearest lights for faith in times of hardship. The writer, the apostle Paul, has been imprisoned under Imperial Guard. Re-reading this short book during the pandemic made me notice Paul's grief in new ways. In his letter, he laments that he cannot visit the people he longs to be with. He also shares the news that a close friend, Epaphroditus, had nearly died from illness: *"He was indeed so ill that he nearly died. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, so that I would not have one sorrow after another."* (Philippians 2:27).

And yet, the person who knew great sorrow crafted a letter that overflows with trust, faith, and even joy. Paul writes that he has learned that great spiritual insight: to be "content with whatever I have." It is in this letter that Paul writes of the "peace of God, which surpasses all understanding." (Philippians 4:11; 4:7).

I need frequent reminders that the gifts of faith and joy are not found only in the absence of sorrow, but are given right in the midst of it. There is so much that is out of our control, but we can choose where to place our attention, at least for a few minutes at a time. As Paul wrote in his closing words, pay attention to the good, and keep up the practices of faith.

"Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you." (Philippians 4:8-9).

A journey of many miles begins with one step, as Rev. Judy Swahnberg reminded us last Sunday. What is your next step?

Peace,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matt".

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster
Senior Minister