

Framework:

As the water of

life's pressures is

turned up to boiling, what is the Xian response?

N+



Pentecost XX - 2023

Epistle:  
Philippians 4:1-9

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

<sup>2</sup>I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

<sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, 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. <sup>9</sup>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.

In the name...

"The Church is not a club for religious people. The Church is a way of living together before God, a new way of being human together. What Jesus and the apostles proclaimed was not a new ideology or a new religion, in our attenuated modern sense. What they proclaimed was salvation, and that meant a new human world, a new social and political reality. They proclaimed that God had established the eschatological order of human life in the midst of history, not perfectly, but truly. The Church anticipates the form of the human race as it will be when it comes to maturity; she is the 'already' of the new humanity that will be perfected in the 'not yet' of the last day. Conversion is the beginning of a 'resocialization,' induction into an alternative *paideia*, and 'inculturation' into the way of life practiced by the eschatological humanity...The gospel is the announcement of the Father's formation, through His Son and the Spirit, of a new city—the city of God...God created a world of stories, symbols, rituals, and community rules. Into this world of stories, God introduced a rival story; into a world of books, God came with His own library; in a world of symbols and rituals and sacrificial meals, the Church was organized by a ritual bath and a feast of bread and wine; in the midst of cultures with their own ethos and moral atmosphere, God gathered a community to produce the aroma of Christ in their life together." - *Against Christianity*, Peter Leithart, p. 17-18

THIS SERMON IS PART OF MY ANSWER

When I read of the parable told by our Lord this morning, I think of that quote. "Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet." <sup>10</sup>Those slaves

at any given moment, I am, ~~like~~ like you, supposed to be doing the following:

1. going to work
2. parenting - kiss all the babies
3. PT for back injury
4. work out
5. double check that 401K matching/  
pay those bills
6. whose car needs an oil  
change? Tires?
7. read Bible
8. probs should fundraise  
about 6 figures today
9. call bishop - week overdue
10. speak at conference on
11. probs should <sup>book</sup> weed garden

12. shoot!  
4 games  
this week



went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests." The good and the bad. The guy thrown out wasn't thrown out because he was bad, but because he didn't come to feast. The bad are welcome at the feast. You just need to come for the sake of feasting (point at altar).

That story makes me think of the saints lives that I read so often. Saints like John Bosco who filled the halls of the kingdom with bad boys whom no one wanted (read some of the following):

*John Bosco, also known as Giovanni Melchiorre Bosco and Don Bosco, was born in Becchi, Italy, on August 16, 1815. His birth came just after the end of the Napoleonic Wars which ravaged the area. Compounding the problems on his birthday, there was also a drought and a famine at the time of his birth.*

*At the age of two, John lost his father, leaving him and his two older brothers to be raised by his mother, Margherita. His "Mama Margherita Occhiena" would herself be declared venerable by the Church in 2006.*

*Raised primarily by his mother, John attended church and became very devout. When he was not in church, he helped his family grow food and raise sheep. They were very poor, but despite their poverty his mother also found enough to share with the homeless who sometimes came to the door seeking food, shelter or clothing.*

*When John was nine years old, he had the first of several vivid dreams that would influence his life. In his dream, he encountered a multitude of boys who swore as they played. Among these boys, he encountered a great, majestic man and woman. The man told him that in meekness and charity, he would "conquer these your friends." Then a lady, also majestic said, "Be strong, humble and robust. When the time comes, you will understand everything." This dream influenced John the rest of his life.*

*Not long afterwards, John witnessed a traveling troupe of circus performers. He was enthralled by their magic tricks and acrobatics. He realized if he learned their tricks, he could use them to attract others and hold their attention. He studied their tricks and learned how to perform some himself.*

*One Sunday evening, John staged a show for the kids he played with and was heartily applauded. At the end of the show, he recited the homily he heard earlier in the day. He ended by inviting his neighbors to pray with him. His shows and games were repeated and during this time, John discerned the call to become a priest.*

*To be a priest, John required an education, something he lacked because of poverty. However, he found a priest willing to provide him with some teaching and a few books. John's older brother became angry at this apparent disloyalty, and he reportedly whipped John saying he's "a farmer like us!"*

*In the years that followed, Fr. Bosco expanded his mission, which had, and still has, much work to do.*

*Fr. Bosco died on January 31, 1888. The call for his canonization was immediate. Pope Pius XI knew Fr. Bosco personally and agreed, declaring him blessed in 1929. St. John Bosco was canonized on Easter Sunday, 1934 and he was given the title, "Father and Teacher of Youth."*

*In 2002, Pope John Paul II was petitioned to declare St. John Bosco the Patron of Stage Magicians. St. Bosco had pioneered the art of what is today called "Gospel Magic," using magic and other feats to attract attention and engage the youth.*

*Saint John Bosco is the patron saint of apprentices, editors and publishers, schoolchildren, magicians, and juvenile delinquents. His feast day is on January 31.*

A quick comment on the epistle from which we plucked my eldest daughter's name (it's just too good):

This is the end of Philippians, a prison letter. You can smell the damp floors in his sentences, the crack in his voice, the sobriety and clear-headedness of a death.

So what do you write about when you're dying and a pastor? Paul gives us at least 3 things:

1. Unity. Paul has two long-time friends in the church – Euodia and Syntyche. They're apparently not getting along. Paul wants their friendship to reflect the Gospel. For the church to flourish. I just love that as he stares his own martyrdom in the face, he's writing for others to lock arms in the Gospel and serve the church. I love that they work with Clement, whose church and basilica I've seen in Rome. It's 3-stories. This stuff is real.
2. Joy. What do you write about when you're dying? Rejoicing, gratitude, and prayer. With those three, peace will come. If joy can come to a man who knows he's soon to be killed, then joy can come to us. If joy produces gratitude, then prayer is second-nature. If prayer is part of our daily life, then peace will guard it. Even if you're staring death in the face.
3. Finally, he mentions Jesus. Or does he? He says this wonderful refrain, "Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, 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.'" Appealing to the beloved community, Paul lists the kind of qualities that are to be true of our thoughts, words, and actions. And in so doing, I honestly feel like he has described our Lord (and so he has).
4. This passage is suggestive of spiritual disciplines, which in every other century were viewed as the exercises of rest themselves. Stop thinking of spiritual cultivation as mere

work—endless Netflix series with your scotch and soda is not the only form of leisure in this world—prayer, reading of Scripture, and saints lections are as renewing for me at that 6:30pm hour (also known as ‘my last nerve’) as any glass of merlot. Find a script that is spiritually instructive and go with the script. (Talk about *Expecto Patronum* if you must.)



I really love this passage of Scripture. The older I get, the more that I see the world for what it truly is. A place of tremendous noise and clamor and comparing and wonton jealousy and stuff. The people of God have need of none of it. We need only what is pure. We need only what is full of honor. We need only that which is just.

At this altar, the good and bad are called to feast. We need only Jesus, who is both the host and the entrée. He’s already decked you fashionably with the robe of immortality, so enter with boldness and take your seat with royalty. He has filled the throne room today with those whom he found from the main street of ordinary life. And come hungry, for it is those who hunger and thirst after a righteousness not their own who shall be filled today. In the name...