

Calling All Followers

Good morning, City Hope Church. It is an honor to be with you today. If today is your first time here... Welcome! ...We would love to learn more about you and you learn more about this wonderful place.

Beach Camp wasn't just fun. We saw a real move of God. Those young people were worshipping! I was reminded, and reminded them, they are not the next generation, they are the now generation.

These young people can change the world! I'm so excited about the future.

I want to thank all of you who give to City Hope so we can provide opportunities like that. Also, We had several volunteers who took off work or time away from family to go and invest in these students. I cant say thank you enough.

Anyone have a minute to hear a Word from God? I Everybody like who your sitting next to? I You have to open your mouth if you want to get fed! I Feel free to shout me down... its ok to get excited in church! Say things like Amen...preach it...that's for my neighbor!

Today we are focusing on JOY...our world needs more Joy! We need more joyful people! Joy seems to be a missing ingredient in so many lives.

Sometimes we get joy and happiness a little mixed up. They are for sure similar.

Illustration / Two Balloons and a Candle

Joy is on the inside.

I want to look at a piece of a letter from the Apostle Paul. Paul, currently is a Jesus freak. He loves the Lord because God completely changed his life.

He is writing a letter to the people at the church of Philippi. Paul planted this church, and he loved it dearly.

Stand with me in honor of the reading of God's Word.

Philippians 2.19-30 | ¹⁹ Now I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be encouraged by news about you. ²⁰ For I have no one else like-minded who will genuinely care about your interests; ²¹ all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know his proven character, because he has served with me in the gospel ministry like a son with a father. ²³ Therefore, I hope to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. ²⁴ I am confident in the Lord that I myself will also come soon. ²⁵ But I considered it necessary to send you Epaphroditus—my brother, coworker, and fellow soldier, as well as your messenger and minister to my need— ²⁶ since he has been longing for all of you and was distressed because you heard that he was sick. ²⁷ Indeed, he was so sick that he nearly died. However, God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ For this reason, I am very eager to send him so that you may rejoice again when you see him and I may be less anxious. ²⁹ Therefore, welcome him in the Lord with great joy and hold people like him in honor, ³⁰ because he came close to

death for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up what was lacking in your ministry to me.

One of the greatest things about Paul is his unbelievable focus on Christ. If you have been in church, you have probably heard this but kind of skipped over this part...but Paul was writing this letter to them from prison!

Talk about a joy-killer...Lets think about that for a minute...most people who get thrown into prison blame everyone else. What would our attitude be if we were Paul?

You and I would probably be like, thanks God, I'm trying to live for you and this is how you repay me. I need a good lawyer, I wanna get out of here because this fat guy named Bubba keeps looking at me really weird.

Most people would totally lose focus, blame God and quit! Not Paul...Paul's suffering in prison was for a reason and Paul accepted that reason!

His situation did not affect his submission. His obedience remained!

When things don't go the way we expected, we allow distance to creep in. We allow doubt to creep in, we allow distractions to creep in...before we realize it, we are separated from the callings that God has on our lives. I would obey if...

Paul would not let his circumstances keep him from his calling.

Paul spent the beginning of chapter 2 highlighting all that Jesus was and is. Jesus was a servant, Jesus was humble, Jesus was the name above all names. Paul was reminding them and encouraging them that there is Joy in Jesus.

Maybe that's the word God wants you to hear today. You've been searching for Joy in everything this world can offer and you're still empty. Can I tell you today church...True, lasting, **Everyday Joy can only be found in King Jesus.**

Paul gives us all of these wonderful characteristics of a Holy Jesus. Ok, I'm so thankful for all those characteristics that Jesus has, but I can't be like Jesus... He was perfect.

Paul is saying...this is what we are striving for but let me tell you about some others people.

He gives examples of people who are just like us, who are living lives worth mimicking. He tells us of 2 men.

Timothy was born into a dysfunctional family. Father was Greek, Mother was a Jew. He grew up in a single parent home with his mother and grandmother.

Epaphroditus means belonging to Aphrodite...Greek God | Parents who served false Gods...trained and taught to serve false Gods.

These are 2 ordinary men, that you and I can relate to. Here is what jump out to me when reading this.

Paul used these two as examples, because their lifestyle matched their words. They didn't say one thing and live a different way.

Illustration: Coke bottle with water inside. People want to know that the label you wear corresponds to the substance that is found in the bottle.

We've all heard the saying; "actions speak louder than words." The way you act, as one who is labeled a Christian, is the most important aspect of your witness to others.

There are people who you and I come in contact with on a daily basis that are in need of Jesus and Joy....they are watching how you act.

They are watching how you treat people. They are watching the places you go. They are reading your social media posts.

I'm not saying we have to follow a bunch of rules...Faith is more than following a list of do's and don'ts...the action to live for Christ is our response to His love for us.

As Paul is explaining who these two men are and what they're all about, I believe we see some very significant callings that those who claim Christ should strive to have in our lives.

1. A Call to Love People | Vs. 20 ... who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

Timothy looked out for others. His mindset was, what's best for people? That's so foreign to our what's best for me mindset.

Look what Paul says..."I have no one else like him." Why? Because this is hard. It's against every natural fiber in our soul. It takes work. It takes intentionality. If it was easy, everyone would be doing it.

Paul is doing exactly what he told the church they needed to do in verses 3&4....³ **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves.** ⁴ **Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others.**

Remember the 2nd greatest command in all of the Bible...**Love your neighbor.**

If you are a Jesus follower, there is a call on your life to say yes to loving others. And this truly matters. You can't delegate this out to the pastors and people who are more churchy than you.

Your yes matters because people matter. Your obedience is a big deal to God.

Look around and see your people God has placed in your path. In your job. In your neighborhood, In your community, in your school. Find people you can deposit the Joy of the Lord into.

Who's your one? Someone that is close to you but far from God?

When you see Jesus change your people, people become your priority.

It starts by answering the call to love others. | The second call we see from Timothy's life.

2. **A Call to Love the Church** | Vs. 21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.

Timothy was interested in what Jesus was interested in.

What are the interests of Christ?

Ephesians 5.25 | Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her...

Jesus died for His church. If you are going to die for something, it probably means an awful lot to you. He loves the church. It is his bride!

The church is the CONTEXT whereby God grows us and conforms us to the image of Christ.

The church community is where we learn to love God and others | where we are strengthened and transformed by the truth of His Word | where we're taught to pray, to worship, and to serve | where we are investing our time and abilities for things eternal.

The church matters because Jesus chose it to show the world the message of His love. And this message of love is the world's only HOPE.

Question to reflect on...Do I love Gods Church? (Find one and be all in)

If you are a parent, I cannot think of anything more vital than teaching your children to love the Church. To serve, to lead, to give.

Illustration: Emma starting to tithe this year.

"You can be committed to Church but not committed to Christ, but you cannot be committed to Christ and not committed to church."

How well are you answering the call to love the church? (Serve with your time, talent, treasure?)

I know Sundays are traditionally held as the day we “go to church”...but I can just say this...It’s really hard to get in shape spiritually if you are only working out on Sundays.

We aren’t talking about just attending church...we are talking about being engaged with the church. (The Loop, Small Groups, Mens/Womens, Students, Classes)

There is a call on our lives to love the church.

3. **A Call to Love the Gospel** | Vs. 22 But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child *serv*ing his father.

The gospel is the good news that God loves the world enough to give His only Son to die for our sin.

Timothy had a desire to get the good news out. He was continuously being sent. The Colossians need Jesus, I’m in. The Thessalonians need Jesus, I’m in! Oh, the Philippians need someone to tell them about Jesus...I’m in!

If I’m only caught up in my little world, I’m never going to change anyone else’s.

He received the love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, salvation, joy from Jesus and the rest of his life was devoted to making sure others received it as well.

That is the call for us to love the Gospel!

The gospel is a *bold* message, and we should never be ashamed of proclaiming it. It is a *powerful* message, because it is God’s good news. It is a *saving* message, because it is the only thing that can truly transform the human heart.

Romans 1.16 – For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,

In the Gospel, we discover we are far worse off than we thought, and far more loved than we ever dreamed. | Steven Curtis Chapman

We see a love for the Gospel in the life of Epaphroditus as well.

Vs. 30 | ³⁰ because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

Epaphroditus took risks....why? for the work of Christ! He loved the Gospel and wanted more people to experience it.

We are called to live life in this manner because this is what Jesus did for us. He lived and died for you!

Christlike characteristics produce Joy...A life of Joy is found in being humble and submissive to the call of God.

Conclusion II I want to close our time together with a short story.

In the eleventh century, King Henry III of Bavaria grew tired of court life and the pressures of being a monarch. He made application to Prior Richard at a local monastery, asking to be accepted as a contemplative and spend the rest of his life in the monastery. "Your Majesty," said Prior Richard, "do you understand that the pledge here is one of obedience? That will be hard because you have been a king." "I understand," said Henry. "The rest of my life I will be obedient to you, as Christ leads you." "Then I will tell you what to do," said Prior Richard. "Go back to your throne and serve faithfully in the place where God has put you." When King Henry died, a statement was written: "The King learned to lead by being obedient."

Paul was a leader...because he was obedient to Gods call. Timothy was a leader... because he was obedient. Epaphroditus was a leader...because he was obedient to Gods call.

Let's us be obedient to the call that God has put on our lives....Let's love others I Let's love the church I Let's love the Gospel.

As we finish, I want you to leave you with few questions to respond to.

Have you allowed your situation to hinder your submission? I If you let your circumstances define you, they will defeat you.

Is your life worth imitating?

What will it take to bring the Gospel to every person in the lowcountry? Nation? World?

If you need someone to pray with you...grab one of these prayer team members.

If you need to make some life changing decisions...find one of the Pastors out in the lobby area.

If you need to start serving and being in engaged in the life of this church...go to the information room

PRAY