

Rejoicing in Christ

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. Good morning.

I'm Julie Brown, and I am part of the Women Reading Women and Kensington El Cerrito groups. Today's scripture reading is from Paul's letter to the Philippians, chapter 4, verses 1 through 9, as printed in your liturgy.

A reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends.

I plead with Eudonia, and I plead with Syntyche, to be part of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

[1 : 26] Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again. Rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God will transcend all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put it into practice, and the God of peace will be with you.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thank you, Julie, for that scripture reading. It's good to be back. Thank you for letting me get away to guest preach somewhere else.

[2 : 44] It was nice to be at another church seeing what God's doing, but also, this is a much better crowd to preach to, so I'm thankful that you guys all listened to me.

Let's open to God's word and dig into what he has to say to us this morning. Father, we so long to hear you speak because your word is life.

Your word is truth, and Lord, to whom else shall we go? So would you do that, Lord? Would you, through the preaching of your word, speak life to us, speak peace, and would we receive it as those who love and embrace our Savior, Jesus Christ?

Let's be honored in the preaching of your word, we ask in his name. Amen. All right, so we're finally in the last chapter of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi, and as Jonathan mentioned last week, this is easily his most joyful letter, right?

Even as he's writing this, probably in chains, probably between two Roman soldiers, very likely on his way even to execution, Paul still has what?

[3 : 56] He has this inextinguishable joy, right? One pastor that I love to listen to, his name's John Tyson, he's out in New York City, he titled their series in Philippians, Defiant Joy.

I love that. That defined joy, that's what Paul has here in his heart as he's writing to the Philippians. And especially here in the final chapter of his letter, he's not just saying that he has joy, but he's commanding the church unto joy.

He says, rejoice, rejoice. And again, I say rejoice. Do not be anxious about anything, but rejoice with peace, he says. Now, you might think that such a passage of Scripture would be a delight for a

preacher, like, nice, an upbeat, happy sermon today, or at least very straightforward, right? Like, deal with your anxieties by having faith, showing gratitude, choosing joy, pursuing God's peace, and then see you later, right? Isn't that all I'm supposed to come up here and say? Well, sure, but also not exactly. You know, truthfully, I've actually felt a lot of anxiety preparing this sermon on anxiety this week.

[5 : 02] And I think it's because preaching this passage feels to me like walking on a tightrope. On the one hand, this passage has history for me. I've seen it terribly applied, and I don't want to fall into the same mistake.

Some of you have heard me share this story before, but years ago, there was this pastor's wife I know, knowledgeable, wonderful, respectable, well-meaning, trying to counsel a young woman in their church who is deeply struggling with anxiety.

And you know, with every intention of being helpful and faithful, what this pastor's wife basically ended up saying, though, was, hey, anxiety, I got you. Philippians chapter 4, verse 6, do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your request to God.

Then you'll have peace. So pray, be thankful, stop being anxious. The Bible clearly says it right here. Just let go of your sin of anxiety. Just stop it. Just stop it, and you're good, right?

Now, let me poll the audience. Does that sound more like helpful, Christ-like, Spirit-led biblical counsel or like gaslighting wrapped in a Bible verse, right? And some of you have shared your own experiences with me, similar experiences of Christian counseling, so-called biblical counseling, firsthand experiences.

[6 : 20] As you've struggled with your own anxieties and depression, you've been told by well-meaning Christians who love you that you just need to be more thankful, man. Practice gratitude, choose joy, have more faith, and that should solve it easy peasy, right?

And yet, many of us have found such so-called biblical counsel to be ineffective at best and further damaging at worst, maybe even tempting us to doubt the genuineness of our faith.

So let me be clear this morning. This is not what I want you to hear from this text. I want you to know that the Bible itself teaches us that the law, the commands of God cannot change our hearts or save us.

You can't just thou shalt or thou shalt not someone into healing and wholeness. You can't thou shalt not the anxiety out of someone. And so on the one hand, I come to this passage like super aware and super sensitive to how easy it is to misuse and misapply this verse.

On the one hand, I come to this passage like very anxious, honestly, about being the kind of pastor who just naively throws Bible verses at you and Bible bashes you over the head, expecting you to somehow get fixed because I threw a magical Bible verse at you.

[7 : 31] And yet, on the other hand, I still do want to affirm the sufficiency and the power of the Word of God, right? To truly address and calm our anxieties.

I don't want to overcorrect so far that I end up sidestepping what Paul says here under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. I don't want to shy away from the fact that this apostle of Christ, he does indeed command us to rejoice.

He does command us to pray and give thanks and to trust and believe in the true efficacy of God's peace as a real and powerful resource for our hearts and our minds when we're struggling with anxiety.

So I don't want to be simplistic or insensitive in how I apply this passage. I also don't want to be so overly cautious that I empty this simple passage of Scripture of its divine power for us.

So that's the task for us this morning, to walk this tightrope, right? To neither weaponize this passage nor water it down, to take seriously the complexities of anxiety and to honor those complexities with compassion while still believing that God, through Paul's letter, is offering us something real here, something powerful, and not some simplistic spiritual fix, but a deeply and uniquely Christian way of addressing anxiety.

[8 : 52] So what is that way? What is this deeply and uniquely Christian way of addressing anxiety that I'm talking about? Well, let's start in verses 1 to 3. Look with me at your liturgies. Therefore, he writes, So just imagine this scene for a second with me, all right?

Remember, these letters were read out loud in the churches, right, in front of the whole congregation. So here Paul is addressing his beloved brothers and sisters in verse 1, whom he

loves and longs for.

They're his joy and his crown. And then, oh snap, verse 2, name drops, right? He specifically names two women in the church. Can you imagine that? If I, in a sermon, name two people who are struggling in this church.

Everyone's like looking at that side of the room. Other people are looking at that side of the room, right? Very awkward, but Paul goes for it, all right? Inspired by the Holy Spirit. And he specifically names Euodia and Syntyche.

And he pleads with them both in front of the whole congregation and really in front of the rest of the church for the past 2,000 years, right? To be a what? To be what? Of the same mind in the Lord.

[10:20] Now, we don't have any context or information about what was going on here between these two ladies. So it's pointless and futile to speculate. But what we do know is how Paul addresses them and their relational anxiety within this congregation.

Now, notice what he does and then what he doesn't do. He doesn't dismiss their disagreement as like, it's no big deal. Because honestly, it could have been a big deal. He also doesn't take sides and like provide a tie break for them or offer like a quick, authoritative, apostolic solution.

Because honestly, it probably wasn't black and white either. He gets that this is a tough one, probably a painful one. And so he doesn't command them to just get over yourselves, become BFFs, and just do it because I said so.

Now, even as someone carrying the authority of an apostle, he humbly comes to them. He pleads with them like a beggar. He pleads with them. And in both the Greek and the English, the word plead is there twice. I plead with you, Euodia.

I plead with you, Syntyche. He addresses both women with dignity and equal concern. And most instructively, he doesn't just simply say, hey, just agree, all right?

[11:22] Just agree. Get along. No, he calls them to something higher than agreement. He calls them to a higher calling. He calls them away from what do I think is best? And he calls them toward what do we all know is best for the glory of God and the good of our neighbors.

He doesn't call them to warm, fuzzy sentimentalism, but to their primary mission as Christ's witnesses in the world. He calls them to be of the same mind in the Lord.

He reminds them of their identity as those who contended by his very side for the cause of the gospel. He reminds them that before they are women at odds in the church, they are united to the Lord Jesus Christ, co-workers in the gospel, and sisters whose names are both written in the book of life, meaning they are both destined for the same glorious end in Christ Jesus.

And you see, what Paul is doing here is he's taking what might seem like a small interpersonal squabble, and he's putting it into the grander context of God's much bigger and much more central truths.

Truths about who Iodia and Syntyche are. Truths about what God is doing in the world and about what God truly cares about more than anything else. And this is brought into focus even more.

[12:33] If you pay attention to what Paul says right before he addresses these two women, look at verse 1. Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and my crown, that includes you, Iodia and Syntyche, stand firm in the Lord, my dear and beloved friends.

Now, do you notice the repetition? I've been trying to emphasize it in verses 1 and 2. We'll see it later in verse 4. Stand firm in the Lord. Be of the same mind in the Lord.

For Paul, this is the key. This is the key to our disagreements. This is the key to our anxiety. It's the big, central, foundational truth to all anxiety, not merely doctrine, but union.

Union with Christ. Rejoice in the Lord, he will say. That's union with Christ language. And what I mean when I talk about union with Christ is it's like what Paul wrote in Galatians chapter 2, verse 20.

I have been crucified with Christ. It's no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The life I live in the flesh, I now live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Union with Christ is the beautiful reality that is true of every Christian, that we are crucified and risen with Christ and that we are his and he is ours and we are not alone and we are not our own, but we belong to him.

[13:47] And that everything that is his is ours. His death and his suffering, yes, but also his life and his joy and his glory and his righteousness and his power, his peace, his future and his inheritance, even his very spirit is within us because we are united with Christ by faith.

And you see, if we miss this, then we will totally miss the heart and the intention and the real power of what Paul is saying here to the church in Philippi in chapter 4.

If we miss this little phrase, in the Lord, and if we miss the centrality of union with Christ as the antidote to anxiety, then everything Paul says here is just a Christian version of the vast array of self-help, stress and anxiety reduction techniques you can find at your local bookstore in that big fat old section, right?

So many of these books simply spout, you know, lists of techniques. Try these relaxation techniques. Get more massages. Try these breathing exercises. Try these thought control patterns. Create more margin in your schedule.

Go on vacation more. Get more work-life balance. Clean up your diet. Process your trauma. And don't get me wrong, I'm so for all these things. I'm not anti any of these things. I think there's a ton of wisdom, common grace wisdom and help and relief to be found in all of it.

[15:03] But what Paul and the rest of the scriptures point us to is that when it comes to anxiety, it's not enough to just master a list of techniques.

And it's not enough to try to just curate your environment, minimize your triggers. No, rather than starting with practical techniques, Paul starts with principled truths.

Truths about who God is, what kind of story he's writing, and how to get on the same page as the author and perfecter of our faith. For Paul, union with Christ is the central and controlling theme of all of that.

And that's how we need to read verse 4, rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, rejoice.

Rejoice in the Lord always. And again, this is where I feel the anxiety though, from verses 4 to 7, because it really sounds here like Paul, is he telling us how to feel?

Don't tell me how to feel, right? Is he telling us how to feel? This is a huge no-no, right? In our heavily therapeutic cultural moment where emotional autonomy is sacred, right?

[16:10] And where our feelings are seen not only as valid, but almost as sovereign and untouchable truth, right? And where to question someone's feelings is to question their very identity.

So maybe some of us in this room who feel like we have no reason to rejoice, and I get that. There are people in this room who I know feel no reason to rejoice. Maybe it strikes you as offensive and even insensitive of Paul to write such commands like rejoice and do not be anxious.

Maybe you're thinking to yourselves, don't tell me how to feel. Don't invalidate my feelings. And you have no idea what I've been through or what I'm going through. Now listen, I promise I hear that.

I hear that as your pastor. I'm the pastor of care here. I deeply hear that. I feel that when I sit with many of you. And in fact, if you're here today on the other side of this and you're rolling your eyes like snowflakes.

Feelings are feelings. Facts are facts. If that's you, you need to hear that there's actually something healthy to this modern sensitivity. People should rightly want to be understood and to be treated as whole persons, human beings with complex stories of both victimhood and irresponsibility.

[17:23] And if you ever have had your grief or your trauma missed or minimized while simultaneously being told how to feel, it can be hurtful and lonely and can feel very dehumanizing.

So I don't think Paul is simplistically just commanding people to rejoice just like that with a snap of his apostolic fingers. Just do it. Stop it. He's not saying feel happy or else you're failing as a Christian.

He's not demanding fake smiles, inauthenticity, or emotional denial. And yet, he truly does mean it when he commands us to rejoice in the Lord always.

And he says it again emphatically, rejoice. But again, the key here, and I think it's this, it's in the Lord. The key is union with Christ.

It's almost as if Paul knew that apart from being united with the risen Lord, he could not even issue such a command to rejoice. But because Christ is risen, even while we may have much reason to grieve in Christ, there is always reason to rejoice as well.

[18:27] In Christ, it is always appropriate, even if it's hard, to rejoice. Because no matter how broken this creation is, Christ is risen. New creation has come.

New creation is coming again. And if anyone is in Christ, if anyone is united with Christ, they are a new creation. And Paul continues this line of thinking in verse 5.

Read that with me. Let your gentleness, or I like to translate this, let your quiet strength. I think that's a good translation. Let your quiet strength be evident to all. The Lord is near. See, for Paul,

he knows that those who are united with Christ, they don't have to be reactionary, self-defensive, and controlling.

They don't have to avenge themselves when they're wronged or grasp at what they think they deserve. They're united with Christ. They're good. And their Lord is near. He's near to the brokenhearted.

He's near to return to right all wrongs and to ensure that the moral arc of the universe bends toward justice. And see, it's on the basis of all of this that Paul then says, do not be anxious about anything. [19 : 31] The primary intention isn't to guilt trip you for your anxiety. This isn't Paul saying you're a bad Christian when you feel overwhelmed. No, it's Paul lovingly pointing you to the richness of your inheritance in Christ.

It's less about looking inward and rebuking yourself for your anxiety and more about looking upward and reframing your anxiety in the light of God's truth. Imagine a mother, right?

My child says, I'm scared. I'm scared of the dark, right? The child is afraid of the dark but needs to go to sleep, so the mother sits by her child, rubs the child's back in the dark, gently whispers into her ears the most frequent command in the Bible, fear not.

Hush, little baby, don't be afraid. This isn't a rebuke. This isn't a reproof, right? So much as a tender, loving assurance of her parental presence.

It's sympathetic comfort spoken to true and real concerns. You know, the verb Paul uses here for anxiety, like be anxious or do not be anxious, it's merim nao, okay?

[20 : 36] Merim nao, if you take that apart etymologically, you could understand it as meaning to have a divided mind. Merim nao, to have a divided mind. So for example, Jesus uses this word when Martha is like upset with Mary because Martha is making all these preparations in the home and Mary's sitting at the feet of Jesus just listening to him.

Jesus says, Martha, Martha, you are not merim nao, or sorry, Martha, Martha, you are merim nao-ing over many things, he says to her, but only one thing is needed.

And I think this so beautifully illustrates the point Paul is making here when he says do not be anxious. In one sense, it's not wrong to be anxious. It's not wrong to have many cares and concerns.

In fact, the same word merim nao is used earlier in Paul's letter to the Philippians to speak about how Timothy, he merim nao's for the church in Philippi. He's spoken well of because of his merim nao-ing, all right?

It's not wrong to care. It's not wrong to be burdened. But when our scattered concerns become disordered and our fears and our anxieties no longer coexist with our faith and trust in Christ, but actually eclipse Christ altogether, that is when our anxiety has turned into something problematic and sinful.

[21 : 48] When we let the many things overcome and outshine the one thing, and the one thing that Mary chose, which is what? Union and communion with the Lord. So when Paul says do not be anxious, he's not commanding you to suppress your feelings, and he's definitely not scolding you for being human and recognizing your mortality, your lack of control over the outcomes of your life, and all the uncertainty that surrounds you.

No, he's simply inviting you to reorder your heart and set it on something far more solid than the creature. He's inviting you to lean back on your creator.

And my question is, has that been your response to these anxious times that we're living in? As many of our Bay Area livelihoods are threatened with, you know, tech companies, governmental agencies, various other institutions going pretty lean, we all probably know someone who's lost a job recently because of all the cutbacks, others struggling to even find work, and then add to that all the geopolitical instability and chaos, the seeming triumph of injustice in many parts of the world leading to hunger and dispossession and trauma upon trauma.

And then, even for the most fortunate and privileged among us, we're still trying to navigate all the ideological polarization, right, the division and the culture war that threatens our families, our churches, our workplaces, our friendships and institutions.

And if all this, and you know, all this stuff that I just mentioned, it doesn't even account for our day-to-day, right, our hyper-specific, super-localized personal anxieties that we're all individually dealing with and the subtle idols that can often be attached.

[23 : 23] What if I lose it all? What if my kids don't turn out? What if I don't find love? What if I don't get into that school? What if I don't make partner? What if I don't get that promotion? There is a

whole lot that warrants our anxiety.

But the question isn't ultimately, should I be anxious or not? But what does God want me to do with my anxiety? Bow to it?

Let it cripple and dominate me or combat it with and in the presence of the Lord? See, look, Paul doesn't just say, do not be anxious, but he gives us a positive command as well in conjunction.

He gives a thou shalt not with a thou shalt. Thou shalt make your requests known to God, he says.

This is what we're called to do with our anxieties. To be honest with them and to bring them to God and to do so with a posture of prayer and petition, it says.

Basically, a posture of helplessness, need, and vulnerability. God is honored. God is honored when we come to Him with our anxieties in the same way we are honored when our children come to us entrusting themselves and their insecurities to us, seeking help with things that are too big for them to handle.

[24 : 38] While the world might tell us that making our neediness and our uncertainty and our vulnerability and anxiety known, while the world might tell us that that is an act of weakness, you know what God says?

He says that's an act of worship. And I also don't want us to miss how Paul says that we're to present our requests in every situation by prayer and petition with thanksgiving as well.

With gratitude, with thanksgiving. And maybe this sounds weird to you, like how can a beggar, a petitioner before God, like ask Him for something and then thank Him at the very same time? Isn't the usual order? I beg, I ask.

And if and only if I receive, then and only then do I give thanks. But Paul is seeming to say here that we give thanks as we ask, not even knowing if we will receive what we ask for.

What's up with that? How does that work? Why would anyone do that? Well, what if Paul is inviting us to give thanks not only after we receive what we've asked for, but even as we ask, like even before the answer comes, not because we know how He will answer, but because we know what kind of God He is.

[25 : 43] What if Paul is challenging us to give thanks even in the case that the answer might be no, but we give thanks anyway because we believe that the very outcome we didn't ask for is the exact thing we would have asked for if we knew everything that God knows.

And maybe you're thinking, I could never have that much faith. I could never have that kind of faith. And you're thinking to yourself, like, I'm going to need a lot more than that from God before I trust Him like that, before I give thanks to Him like that.

Well, the late Tim Keller, he gives this illustration about a four-year-old child, and he said, you know, if a four-year-old said, I have reason to believe that my parent is bad and an untrustworthy parent because they aren't doing the things I would have done the way I would have done it, and I don't understand why they've chosen to do things this way, we don't say, oh, wow, that's a really good point.

Great logic right there. You have every reason then, little boy, to go ahead and run away. No. No. We might smile. We might give them a hug, come around them, be sympathetic, but no, we don't let them run away because we know that there are simply things that a four-year-old will not be able to understand yet about their loving parents.

So for us to say, I know this God is bad and an untrustworthy God until He explains why everything happens and I can fully understand it, on that same basis, every four-year-old in the world has the right to run away from home.

[27 : 07] If we can accept that there are things a four-year-old might not yet understand about the plans and intentions of their loving parent, might we also be able to accept there are things that we cannot understand about the plans and intentions of our loving God and Father in heaven?

Just because we don't understand doesn't make God less trustworthy. What if it just means that we are children who have a wiser father, a good father in heaven who loves it when we talk to Him?

And this is why we are emphasizing prayer in this church. We want to see you in the boiler room.

We want to see you on Second Wednesdays. Are we going to be a praying church who come into the presence of our Father?

Or are we too busy to pray because we're spinning our wheels trying to rid ourselves of all our anxieties with active hands rather than folded hands? Are you anxious?

Pray. Pray. And not because that's the secret Christian technique to fight anxiety, but because kneeling in prayer is kneeling in the presence of your Father in heaven. And man, if you accept that, if you can come to God as your Father in heaven, if you can come to Him in union with your big brother, Jesus Christ, as an adopted child of God, trusting Him, thanking Him, casting your anxieties upon Him, man, there is a peace that He has for you.

[28 : 27] And it's real and it's powerful and it's unlike anything else. Verse 7 says, And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

You know, so much of what this harsh world teaches us is that the only way to peace is to be strong. Like so strong that no one dares to mess with me. So strong that we can secure our own peace.

Basically, the only way to peace is invincibility. But what makes the peace of God, the peace of Christ so utterly beautiful and unique is that it's a peace that does not require invincibility on your part or any power at all on your part.

And that's how it transcends all understanding. It's even a peace that can be had in a storm, in chaos, in grief, in suffering, in pain, in turmoil. Remember again where Paul is writing this from, from prison.

When so much of the world around us tells us that the way to peace is through fixing and reshaping the external world around us. Conforming the rest of the world to our will so that we can be at peace with it.

[29 : 32] Paul here is offering an alternative kind of peace. Not a peace that flattens everything else out, flattens everyone else out outside of us. But an internal peace, a peace that can guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus no matter what is happening in the world.

A peace that can only be had in the Lord, in union with Christ. So my question, my question is do you want it for yourself, for your family, for your fractured, frantic world?

Because it's available. It's available. It's available in Him, in Christ. All it takes is repentance. All it takes is to change your mind. Not emptying your mind, but filling it with Christ. Verse 8, finally he says, whatever is true, noble, right, pure, whatever is lovely, admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think, meditate, ruminate, ponder, and dwell upon such things.

This is Christian mindfulness. Not the evacuation, but the elevation of our thoughts. Not the numbing of the mind, but the nourishing of the mind. You know, a lot of commentators mention how not exclusively Christian this list of things is that we're supposed to put our minds on, and it's true. A Christian should be able to admire and celebrate truth and purity and beauty and excellence anywhere and everywhere it can be found. But all such truth, and not just truth, but loveliness and attractiveness and praiseworthiness, it should always point us back to where it came from and to where it's supposed to be going.

[31 : 02] Whether it's the birds of the air, the lilies of the field, the quiet strength and the sacrificial love that we witness from time to time in our heroes, it's all from God, and it's all to God.

It's all a picture pointing to the all-surpassing worth of Jesus Christ, who is the highest good, who is the truest beauty. And I love how Paul assures us that when we make this our mental habit, to dwell on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy, and when we let it draw our minds to Christ, and especially when we are memorizing the Word of God, meditating upon the soul-stirring Scriptures.

Paul doesn't just repeat that the peace of God will guard our hearts against anxiety, but that the God of peace Himself will be with us.

See, that is the power of union with Christ, the peaceful presence of God with us in Christ. It's the only kind of presence that can form us into the non-anxious presence the world so desperately needs.

This is what God is offering us today, a non-anxious life. Not that we never feel anxious, or that we know and can control every outcome, but that we are invited to steadily practice the presence of God in every circumstance, unflappable, as witnesses to the serenity of our suffering Savior, who is now seated on high, witnesses to a one-of-a-kind peace that doesn't come from invincibility, but from intimacy.

[32 : 33] A peace that doesn't guard our circumstances, but guards our hearts and minds. A peace that surpasses all understanding because it's not based on the stories we would have written if we were the authors of His, my greatest fear, my greatest source of anxiety.

But then he looked at the man who had lost his teenage son, and he said, but watching you, watching your peace, watching your hope, watching your quiet strength, I've seen something in you that tells me that even if I lost what I love most and what I probably honestly do idolize, I think I could still make it too as long as I have what you have.

And that's the peace that surpasses all understanding. That's the presence of Christ making His people into a non-anxious presence in our super-anxious world.

That's the peace that inspired Horatio Spafford, right, as he passed the watery grave of his daughters to write the song we sang earlier, It Is Well With My Soul. It wasn't stoicism or resignation or fake piety.

It wasn't the absence of grief and heartbreak and anxiety. No, it was the presence of a Father in heaven who has also lost a son.

[33 : 51] It was the presence of Christ who was that son yet is now risen and exalted in glory. So that is the key. Union with that Lord.

And there is no other kind of Lord, no other kind of God that can meet us in our anxiety. But He offers us something real and powerful and good, and it's free.

It only cost Him. So we're about to come to this table where we will remember that the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him. And by His wounds, all our anxieties are healed.

Let's pray. Oh Lord, we come to You as the God of all peace. Would You strike us with the profundity of what we do every week when we pass the peace of Christ to one another?

That is a gift that only those who are united with Christ can offer in full. Oh Lord, convince us of this peace that You have for us.

[35 : 02] Help us to delight in the fact that we are united with the crucified and risen Lord. Make that our everything. Make us unflappable. Make us a non-anxious presence in the world and change the world because of it, God.

Because of our union with Christ and our deepening communion with Him. So would that happen even now as we come to Your table, we ask in Your Son's name. Amen.