

New Year's Day 2024 Service - True Contentment

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Date: 01 January 2024

[0 : 00] Well, it's good to be together today. A beautiful day outside, the first day of a new year, and it's better still to begin, gathered together in a place of worship, seeking God's presence and his favor over us.

And we come to worship God. We'll sing to his praise. We'll begin by singing Psalm 103, in the Sing Psalms version, page 135 of the psalm book.

Psalm 103, we'll sing from verse 1 to verse 11. The tune is before the throne. Praise God, my soul, with all my heart. Let me exalt his holy name.

Forget not all his benefits, his praise, my soul, in song proclaim. We'll sing from verse 1 to 11 to God's praise. Praise God, my soul, with all my heart.

Let me exalt his holy name. Our gift of all his benefits, his praise, my soul, in song proclaim.

[1 : 15] The Lord gives you all your sins, And his grace, my soul, in song proclaim.

Your life he rescues from the grave, And grinds you in his tenderness, And grinds you in his tenderness.

He's a despise, your deep desires, Of his unending stores of good.

So that just like the being of strength, Your youthful anger is renewed.

The Lord is known for righteous acts, And justice to tantroded ones, To Moses he made known his ways, His mighty deeds to Israel's sons.

[2 : 39] The Lord is merciful and kind, To anger slow and full of grace, He will not constantly reprove, For in his anger hide his face.

He does not punish our misdeeds, Or give our sins their just reward, Our greatest love has high as ten Towards all those who fear the Lord.

Let's bow our heads in a word of prayer. Let us pray. Lord our gracious God, As we begin our time of worship at this, The beginning of a new year, We thank you for the privilege that is ours, The freedom we have to come together this day, In this way, To lift up our voices in praise to you, To sing of your great steadfast love, To sing of your great goodness to us, And to come, O Lord, Seeking to praise you as our God with all our soul, To seek to worship you as you are worthy of, And we thank you that this psalm reminds us of your great goodness, Your mercy towards us.

As it goes on, That we didn't sing, As far as east is from the west, So far his love has borne away our many sins and trespasses. And we thank you, Lord, That it is a wonderful psalm to remind us, At the beginning of a year, Of how we are to live.

We are to live as a people who give all praise and glory to you. And we thank you, Lord, That your mercy is so great, That you have not turned away from us, But that you are still a God who looks down upon your people, A God who looks, O Lord, For a people to turn to you, To come to you, To find rest and joy and salvation, And all that you offer us through your Son, Christ Jesus.

[5 : 08] And we pray today, Lord, As we hear your word, And as we begin in worship a new year, That has all the uncertainties that lie ahead of us, We thank you that you are our constant companion, That you are the one who prepares the way for his people, That you are the one who goes before us, And that we can be assured and confident, That whatever is in store for us, Whether it be times of joy or trouble, That we have you there with us.

And so, Lord, We pray that you will bless us as a people, In our homes, In our families, In our congregation as a whole, That you will make your face to shine upon us, That we will know your glory, Your presence with us, Day after day.

And we thank you, Lord, That around the world today, As a people take in a new year, As we see much celebration going on around the world, We see, too, How many are in a lost state, How many are without Christ, How many are perishing in this world.

But we thank you that your gospel is mighty and powerful, And that you have your people to all ends of the earth, That your people gather In so many different parts of the world today, Lifting up

their voices to you as we have, And will do us well, Lifting up our praise and our prayers to you, Asking for your goodness and your mercy To be upon us as a people, Asking for you to intervene in ways, O Lord, That are so outwith of our control, When we see, O Lord, All the troubles of this world, The situations that we cannot impact ourselves, Whether it's in the large-scale matters of this world, Or even in our own individual lives, Or the lives of others, Lord, There are so many things that we feel helpless in, So many things that we cannot impact ourselves, But yet we thank you for the joy and the privilege of prayer, For we know we can depend on you, As the one who is able to do what we cannot, What is impossible with man is possible with God, And so help us in our prayers day after day, To come in faith, To come in dependence, To come in joy to you, As the one who has opened the way for us, That we come in the name, Above every name, The name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, The one through whose death we see a way opened up, When the curtain was torn in two, As your word describes, As Jesus was on the cross, That we saw the way opened up to you, As our Father in heaven, That we come through our great high priest, The Lord Jesus Christ, And so hear our prayers, Lord, And answer according to your will, And may you bless your word to us today, As we hear it, And as we share it together, And wherever it's shared today, Lord, We pray that you would bless it to all ends of the earth, [8 : 14] For your word is mighty and powerful, It goes out with power, Lord, It is able to melt the hardest of hearts, And we pray, Lord, That in every place where your word is proclaimed, That you will give ears to hear and to understand, We thank you for those who will gather in a short time, At the Islay Memorial, For a service of remembrance there, We thank you, Lord, For the peace of this day today, That they'll be able to gather there, And yet in so many ways, Oh Lord, It brings even more sadness to that occasion, When we think of so many years ago, When so many perished, So much sadness and sorrow our island experienced, And that great loss, We thank you that we can look back in remembrance, Giving thanks, Oh Lord, That through all the years, Through all the generations, You are a God who has been faithful, That you are a God who is able to heal the hurts, That you are a God who is able to build up, Even from such disasters, And we pray, And we pray, Lord, That as your word is preached there, As Reverend James McKeever will minister to the people, That you will bless him and uphold him in that, And give him the words to speak, And oh Lord, As this time of year is always a time of reflection, Looking back, We think of many who, As we heard last evening, Are going through so many difficulties and trials, There's much sorrow in reflecting, Looking back, There may be much anxiety looking forward as well, But we pray, Lord, To know your peace, To know that peace that passes understanding, To know your presence and your blessing upon us, So Lord, We pray that you will crown our year with your bounty, That you will do us good, Oh Lord, In all the days ahead, That as we commit ourselves into your hands, We would know you with us in every way, We come again confessing our sins, We confess, Oh Lord, How far short we fall, But again, As we have sung, We are reminded, Lord, That you are able to cast our sins away, And we pray, Lord, For your forgiveness over us as a people, As a nation, As a world, As we confess, Oh Lord, How far from you we have gone, We pray, Lord, That you will bring healing, And restoration, And your great day of salvation to us once again, So Lord, Hear us, We pray, Go before us, Bless us, And hear us in all these things, As we ask it in Jesus' name, For his sake and glory, Amen.

We're going to sing again to God's praise, In Psalm 23, In the Scottish Psalter, Psalm 23, Again, A psalm that reminds us of our constant need of the Lord, That he would be our shepherd, That he would be our shepherd, In this year ahead, The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want, He makes me down to lie, In pastures green, He leadeth me, The quiet waters by, My soul he doth restore again, And me to walk doth make, Within the paths of righteousness, Even for his own name's sake. We'll sing the whole of this psalm, The tune is St. Columba, And we stand to sing to God's praise. The Lord's my shepherd, For God's sake, For God's sake, For God's sake, He leadeth me, He makes me down to lie, In pastures green, He leadeth me, The quiet waters by, My soul he doth restore again, And me to walk doth make, Within the paths of righteousness, [12 : 43] In pastures green, In pastures green, In pastures green, In pastures green, In pastures green, Yet will I fear not ill, For thou art done, For thou art done, Yet will I fear none ill, For Thou art with me and I will, And staffed me not for still.

My table, Thou art, has furnished it, In presence of my foes, My head the dust with o'er anoint, And my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy on my life Shall surely follow me, And in process forevermore My dwelling place shall be.

Well, we can read together in the New Testament, Paul's letter to the Philippians. We're going to read in chapter 4, From the beginning of that chapter, We can read the whole of this chapter together.

Philippians chapter 4. At the end of chapter 3, Paul is speaking to the Philippians About striving on towards the goal.

[15 : 05] We heard a little of that last evening, The forgetting what lies behind And straining forward to what lies ahead. I press towards the goal for the prize Of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

That's in verse 14 of chapter 3. And then in chapter 4, He begins with these words, Therefore, my brothers, Whom I love and long for, My joy and crown, Stand firm thus in the Lord, My beloved. I entreat you, And I entreat Syntyche, To agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, True companion, Help these women Who have laboured side by side With me in the gospel, Together with Clement And the rest of my fellow workers, Whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say, Rejoice. Let your reasonableness Be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything, But in everything, By prayer and supplication.

With thanksgiving, Let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, Which surpasses all understanding, Will guard your hearts and your minds In Christ Jesus.

[16 : 21] Finally, brothers, Whatever is true, Whatever is honourable, Whatever is just, Whatever is pure, Whatever is lovely, Whatever is commendable, If there is any excellence, If there is anything worthy of praise, Think about these things.

What you have learned, And received, And heard, And seen in me, Practice these things, And the God of peace Will be with you. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, That now at length You have revived your concern for me.

You were indeed concerned for me, But you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, For I have learned, In whatever situation I am, To be content.

I know how to be brought low, And I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret Of facing plenty and hunger, Abundance and need.

I can do all things Through him who strengthens me. Yet it was kind of you To share my trouble. And you Philippians yourselves Know that in the beginning Of the gospel, When I left Macedonia, No church entered into partnership with me In giving and receiving Except you only.

[17 : 35] Even in Thessalonica, You sent me help For my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift, But I seek the fruit That increases to your credit.

I have received full payment and more. I am well supplied, Having received from Epaphroditus The gifts you sent. A fragrant offering, A sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

And my God will supply Every need of yours, According to his riches In glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father Be glory forever and ever.

Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you. Especially those of Caesar's household.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ Be with your spirit. Amen. And may God bless that reading From his word. Before we turn to look at some of these verses, We'll sing again To God's praise in Psalm 19.

[18 : 41] Psalm 19 in the Scottish Psalter. We're going to sing from verse 7 Down to verse 11. Page 223 of the psalm books. Psalm 19 at verse 7.

Page 223. It reminds us of the wonder of God's word And how precious it should be to us.

The more than gold, Ye much find gold to be decided, Are the psalmist says. God's law is perfect and converts. The soul in sin that lies. God's testimony is most sure And makes the simple wise. So tune us in Moravia And we'll sing from verse 7 to 11. Amen. Amen. Amen. God's law is perfect and converts.

The soul in sin that lies. God's testimony is most sure And makes the simple wise.

[19 : 58] The statutes of the Lord are white And who rejoice the heart The Lord's covenant is pure and a light To the eyes impart Unspauhted is the fear of God And who rejoice the Lord And who rejoice the Lord And who rejoice the Lord The Son of God The love of God And who rejoice the

Lord Are true and righteous All together

They more than gold, yea, much fine gold, to be decided are.

That honey, honey, from the cold, that trumpet sweeter far.

Born over they thy servant war, that he his life should reign.

And with reward provided for them that keep the same.

[22 : 06] We can turn back to reading the passage we had in Philippians chapter 4. And we're going to look at verse 10 to verse 13. Philippians chapter 4, reading again at verse 10.

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content.

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content.

Beginning of a new year, New Year's Day is always a time of mixed emotions. There's a sense of newness and excitement, maybe about what lies in store for the year ahead.

[23 : 20] It's also a time of sorrow and sadness in many ways. There may be anxieties looking ahead. There may be emotions looking back. We go through so many different emotions at this time of year.

But there's something that's often highlighted for us at this time of year as well. And it's a people who we often see talking about New Year's resolutions. When people look at their lives, often it's what is missing or what's wrong in life that they focus on.

And they see a need for change. I need to take action. I need to do something. And so many make resolutions that this coming year is going to be different.

That things are going to change in whatever different kinds of ways. It's so often the case that January sees a great increase in the number of people joining gyms, taking up memberships in gyms.

And yet by February or March, the numbers are starting to dwindle once again. Because so often we give these things thought, and yet nothing really changes.

[24 : 30] And yet as we go into a new year, yes, there is a need to look at things that need to change. There's no harm in that if there's things we could do better, if there's things we can change in our own lives.

But above all, it's to look at, well, what is it to be content? There's a lot of discontent. There's a lot of anxiety and worry about different things.

But what is it to be content? Do you know what it is to be content? Are you feeling content today as you start a new year?

Contentment often makes us think, well, what is contentment? Where is contentment found? What is our view of contentment? Some people speak of contentment, defining it as a state of peaceful happiness.

And yes, there's a sense of contentment in that. If you're at peace and you're happy, there is a sense of contentment. But what if you're not? What if there isn't peace around?

[25 : 36] What if you're not feeling full of the joys, as it were, full of happiness? Does that mean you're not content or cannot be content? Well, as Paul is writing to the church at Philippi, Paul himself is here speaking about contentment.

And it's not contentment that's just a sense of peaceful happiness. That all is well. Paul is writing from a prison cell. He's writing in his own old age.

He's writing in the uncertainty that lies ahead of him of what his own life entails. His uncertainty about his future is a likelihood that he may be put to death very soon.

Is that a peaceful happiness? He's writing to a people who are being persecuted for their faith, who are suffering great loss in so many different ways.

Is that a peaceful happiness? Well, not in the way that the world would define it. There are many struggles going on. And the same may be true for ourselves as well.

[26 : 42] As we begin a new year, it's not just a sense of a peaceful happiness. Yes, it's great if it is. But we can find that there is contentment.

When we see what is behind contentment and where our contentment is truly found and what it really means. You see, contentment is not just based on peace and happiness.

It is not about having what we want or having everything that we feel we want in this world. It's about having what we need and seeing what our greatest need is.

And to have that need fulfilled is to know through contentment. And that's what we find Paul telling us about here. What this contentment is.

Where it's found. And what it brings to us. To experience that true contentment can only be found in rejoicing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

[27 : 47] In knowing the joy of the Lord as our strength. This is a wonderful letter by Paul writing with much thanksgiving to the church at Philippi.

To the people at Philippi. And it's full of joy. It's full of a sense of rejoicing. As we read earlier in chapter 4, verse 4. Rejoice in the Lord always.

Again, I will say rejoice. It's a wonderful letter full of gospel hope. The joy of Christ as our strength. That has Paul's motto for life. For me to live is Christ. And to die is gain. He knows the joy of the Lord.

And that is where his contentment is found. And that's what he's sharing with the church at Philippi. Sharing with ourselves today. The great theologian Augustine once said, You have made us for yourself, O Lord.

[28 : 45] And our heart is restless until it rests in you. Our heart is restless. There's a sense of discontent until our hearts rest in Christ.

And then we know what true contentment is. And so Paul is just showing us some things about this contentment that we can know in Christ here.

And just for a few moments, I want to think about three things that we see regarding this contentment in these verses. And the first thing we want to think about is the search for contentment.

If Paul is writing here about contentment, that he has learned in whatever situation to be content, it's a process that he's gone through.

It's something that he's been searching for in his own life. And something that he knows so many people in Philippi are searching for. So many people down through all the generations are searching for this sense of contentment.

[29 : 51] We see it all around us. A search for contentment. People are restless. People are unsettled. When we're discontent, there's always something that's agitating us.

Always something that's making us look for something more, something extra. But the question is, where are we looking? Where are we looking for our contentment today?

Where are we looking for our contentment as we begin a new year? There was a pilot once. He was flying a passenger plane over some mountain range that he was very familiar with.

It's where he'd grown up. And he was looking down out of the window of the plane this day with his co-pilot beside him. And he was looking down and he pointed and said, See that little lake down there?

When I was a young boy, I used to go out there fishing, sitting on a boat, fishing, spending my days on that lake. And I used to look up into the sky and I'd see the planes passing by overhead.

[30 : 55] And he would say, I used to long for being the pilot of one of these planes. That was my greatest desire. And he turned to his co-pilot and said, Now I look down and wish I was in a boat fishing on the lake.

And it's just that kind of life that we live, where we're always looking beyond and looking for something else. The search for contentment in his life, it almost leads us so often to just going round and round in circles.

No direction and no focus. We're chasing after the end of the rainbow. We're never going to find it. It's like the writer to the Ecclesiastes speaks of again and again, speaking about vanity, vanity, all is vanity.

Living life under the sun is just a chasing after the wind. This cycle that goes on and on. Because we're looking in the wrong place. But as Paul is writing to the church at Philippi here, he's writing as someone who has experienced this himself.

He's experienced this search for contentment, seeking, as he was in his own life, to honor God as he saw it. And his life has always seemed to have a direction, but it was a wrong direction.

[32 : 17] Until the Lord Jesus took hold of him. And so here he is writing now a changed man. And what has changed him is the gospel.

The glory of the Lord Jesus appeared to him, blinding him and bringing him to know salvation in him and what true contentment is. And here he's speaking of this contentment.

He's saying, I know what it is to be content in whatever situation I am in. And as he's writing to the church, to the people at Philippi, he's writing thanking them for their concern towards him.

But he's also almost defending himself, saying, you've been very generous to me. You've given me a very precious gift, a very acceptable gift, as he says in verse 18, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

So they've given him out of their own poverty, as it were, they've given much to Paul. But he wants to write back and say, this is not what's important to me.

[33 : 25] What's important to me is not that I've received this gift, but your willingness to give it.

He's rejoicing in this because, as he says there in verse 10, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that you have shown concern for me.

Because what this reminds him of is that they have come to know Christ more and more, that they are growing in their knowledge of Christ. They're seeing how precious Christ is compared to anything else in this world, and they're willing to give out of their little, they're willing to give to Paul. They didn't have much themselves, but what they had they were willing to share. And so what he's seeing here is the contentment in Christ is not material things.

Contentment in life is not material things. It's the peace of Christ. And he speaks about that so much through this letter as well.

The peace of God that passes understanding. In verse 9 it says, Practice these things and the God of peace will be with you. The peace of God is where contentment is found.

[34 : 43] And that's what Paul has learned in his own life. And it's a remarkable life as you look at the life of Paul. Through all the different challenges he's gone through, he speaks here of being, I know how to be brought low, I know how to abound.

He's been through so many different situations. I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. He knows all these different experiences in his life.

And his search for contentment has brought him down many different paths. But he's found that contentment is found in the strength of the one who gives him strength in all of these situations.

Our lack of contentment in this world shows itself in so many different ways. We see it in such a high rate of debt in our society today where people feel they need to borrow more and more money to be satisfied, to get everything that they need in life.

They need more and more money and they end up going into debt and more misery. They can't afford to repay the money, the anxiety and pressure that that brings. That's not where contentment is found.

[36 : 04] Our lack of content is seen, being content is seen in the demands that people make for their rights. Now, I don't know if you saw it in the news just this past week.

There's a woman in America and she's suing a chocolate company, Hersey Chocolates. She's suing them for \$5 million. Why?

Because she bought a chocolate that on the front showed a chocolate that had a face on it. But when she opened the chocolate, it looked nothing like it did on the packet.

And she's so offended and upset that she's been misled that the chocolate inside wasn't what was shown on the package. So she's suing them for \$5 million. We say it often, the world is going madder all the time.

But people are looking for contentment, fulfillment, satisfaction in all the wrong ways. And all we want is never fulfilled. It's never enough.

[37 : 10] And that's what Paul is reminding us here. As we begin a new year, what is it that we are searching? Where are we searching for our contentment? What is it that we feel is going to make the greatest difference for us in this year that lies ahead?

Well, the second thing we see here is the worth of contentment that Paul speaks about. Has your own view of what it is to be content changed over the years?

I hope it has. That as the years go on, it teaches us what it truly means to be content. And especially as we think of being a people who trust in the Lord.

For some, it'll be content with what we have. For others, it'll be seeking contentment and maybe not truly knowing what it is.

Well, Paul, as he says here, as he's speaking of the search for contentment, he says in verse 11, I am not speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content.

[38 : 27] It's something that's been shaping him throughout his whole life. And it's something that we should be letting God shape in our lives too. Learning what it is to be truly content.

Paul thought he knew what contentment was in the past. And what he was doing was seeking to destroy the Christian church. He thought he was serving God in that end.

But when the Lord changed his life, he realized that was worthless. Worthless comparing to knowing the surpassing worth of Christ Jesus as he speaks about in chapter 3.

Nothing else compares comparing to knowing the Lord Jesus Christ. The worth of contentment in him is everything.

And as he's going on in life, he is learning more and more about what it is to be content. And that's something that we all learn too.

[39 : 37] That we all need to learn as we go on. What it is to be content in Christ. That we can do all things through him who strengthens us.

Again, that text itself, it's one of these ones that is so misrepresented. It's not just to say we can do anything. We can do anything through Christ who strengthens us.

It's facing up to the circumstances that Paul is speaking about here. Whether we're in plenty or hunger, abundance or need.

That's what he's speaking about. I can face up to these situations. I can be content in all of these situations because I know the strength of Christ with me.

And isn't that a great assurance and reassurance for ourselves too? That as we go into a new year, as we look ahead, we don't know what lies ahead for us.

[40 : 37] None of us do. We don't know whether it'll be times of plenty or times of hunger. We don't know whether it'll be times of abundance or times of need.

But we can know for sure that whatever it is, we can go through them with the strength of Christ with us. Paul has learned to be made humble before the Lord.

And he's shading that with the Philippians here. He's saying to them, it doesn't matter what we have, whether it's status, whether it's material things, power, health, wealth. All of these things can be taken from us.

But God is faithful. And God is sufficient. He has learned in every situation. He's learned in his plenty as well as his need.

When he writes to the 1st Timothy in chapter 6, he's there speaking about the love of money. And again, the love of money is where people chase after contentment so much is through money, through riches.

[41 : 45] But he speaks about it in chapter 6 of 1st Timothy. In verse 10, he says, for the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Again, it's just this idea that contentment is found there, not when it brings you away from the faith. In verse 17, in 1st Timothy 6, he goes on to say, as for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, not to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

Again, it's just a wonderful reminder. Don't search for contentment in the riches of this world. It's uncertainty of these riches, but on God, God who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

And if we don't see our worth or the worth of what God has provided for us, then we don't see God as the one who is able to help us in all our needs.

His provision is for everything that we need. His provision provided for us through Christ.

[43 : 05] And now, before these verses in 1st Timothy, in verse 6 and 7, Paul says this, Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment.

For we were brought, we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world. So everything that he says about the riches and the dangers of riches are based on these words before it.

There is great gain in godliness with contentment. And that is where contentment is found. Godliness with contentment.

Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ to be with us and to go before us. And so the question is, as we go into a new year, where is our worth and our value found?

Where is our true contentment found? John Newton, he wrote these words, and I think they're great words even as we think of going into a new year.

[44 : 11] May the grace of Christ our Savior and the Father's boundless love with the Holy Spirit's favor rest upon us from above.

Thus may we abide in union with each other and the Lord and possess in sweet communion joys which earth cannot afford.

Wonderful words, just to think of where our contentment is found. may we enjoy and possess in sweet communion joys which earth cannot afford.

To know that contentment in Christ, godliness with contentment is great gain. That is where we are to look for our contentment.

And that's where we just want to finally just focus on for a few moments. that source of contentment. I can do all things not by myself, not with the help of others.

[45 : 16] I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Paul is not Superman. Paul is not some kind of hero who can face up to any situation through his own strength, but through the joy of the Lord as his strength.

Through the strength that he gives through Christ to his people. Through him who gives me strength. Paul begins this section with a sense of rejoicing in verse 10.

I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that they had provided for him. And in verse 13 there's this sense of joy as well. Joy in that I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Joy that he is sharing with the people at Philippi who are giving out of their poverty. They're giving to him. He mentions in verse 16 that even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.

Why make that point? Because Thessalonica is a rich place, a place of plenty, and yet the Philippians they were sending even there to help him.

[46 : 28] So there is this joy in serving the Lord, joy in knowing the strength that he gives. So whether it's a year of plenty or poverty, whether we're well fed or hungry, whatever lies ahead for us, our contentment, our peace, our strength is found in Christ.

And that is what we want to know for ourselves surely as we go forward. To go forward in his strength. To go forward knowing his peace and his presence.

That verse, verse 13, I can do all things through him who strengthens me. There's two dangers for us in these verses, in this verse.

One is to say the focus is on us. I can do all things. We don't lean one way in that sense.

But there's a second danger and it says through him who strengthens me. Where we just wait as it were. Wait for the Lord. The two go hand in hand.

[47 : 42] I can do all things. I can go through all of these things through him who strengthens me. Just like we had on the notice sheet yesterday on the back of it, that poem by Minnie Harkins.

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown. And he replied, go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God.

That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way. So I went forth and finding the hand of God throgged gladly into the night and he led me towards the hills and the breaking of the day in the lone east, going hand in hand with God trusting ourselves to him.

May this be a year when we go on learning more of what it is to be content, learning more of what it is to know the strength of the Lord through all our different ways of life, whatever it entails, through plenty or hunger, through abundance need, that we will go forward in his strength.

He is the sovereign one to whom I must submit. He is the saviour whom I must serve. He is the sufficient one whom I must trust.

[49 : 14] That's how somebody once put it. And if we know all of these things, we will know godliness with contentment, which is great gain.

So may we go forward with these words to ourselves. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for every circumstance, for every situation that we find ourselves facing up to, that we have you on our side, that we have you as the one who is able to make us content, the one who is able to give us strength to go through all that we face up to,

whether it is time of plenty or time of hunger, time of abundance or time of need.

May we know the strength of the Lord as our help in all the days that lie ahead. May you bless us, Lord, and give us your contentment, your peace that passes all understanding that we will be able to lean upon and rest on you for all of these things.

Continue with us, we pray, throughout this day and in all the days ahead, Lord, as we seek your will and seek your blessing on us. We ask, O Lord, that you would go before us, guiding our steps, our thoughts, and all our actions to be for your glory and for the greater good of all around us, that your light would shine upon us, that your truth be known.

[50 : 50] So hear our prayers and pardon our sins as we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. We're going to conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 65 and the Sing Psalms version, page 82 of the psalm book.

Psalm 65 page 82 will sing from verse 9 down to the end of the psalm. psalm. It's a psalm of praise to God as the psalm begins, and Sion praise awaits you, Lord, to you our vows will pay.

But then towards the end of the psalm, verse 9 to 13, it reminds us that everything that we have is from the hand of God. And verse 11 especially speaks about our situation today.

You crown the year with fruitfulness, your harvests overflow, the grassland flourishes again, the hills with gladness glow. That's our prayer as we go on to a new year that the Lord would crown the year with his fruitfulness and everything, not just the abundance of the grassland flourishing, but as we think of the harvest that we see before us in our day and our age, a people in need of Christ, the Lord would crown his year with a fruitful harvest of those who would praise the Lord.

We'll sing from verse 9 to 13, the tune is Glasgow and we stand to sing. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[52 : 32] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. As you ordained, your streams are full to get the people's bread.

You page the parables of the land, you level of the ground.

You soften it with showers of rain, and make its crops a land.

You've done the year with fruitfulness, your harvest overflow.

[53 : 51] The grass that flourishes again, the hills with gladness flow.

The pastures green with lots are clothed, the meadows covering.

The valleys, they themselves with corn, they shout for joy and sing.

After the benediction, I'll go to the main door. We'll close with a benediction. Now may grace, mercy and peace from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forevermore.

Amen.