

JESUS HAS WORKED OUT OUR SALVATION**Sermon for New Year's Day, 2019****Philippians 2:9-13**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Philippians 2:9-13: ⁹ **That is why God also has very highly exalted Him, and given Him the name that is above every other name,** ¹⁰ **that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven and on earth and under the earth may kneel,** ¹¹ **and that everyone may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

¹² **Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only when I have been with you but also even more now that I am absent, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling!** ¹³ **For it is God who continues to work in you both to be willing and to be doing according to his good purpose.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

New Year's Day has become a national holiday here in Australia and in many countries around the world, but it is not, strictly speaking, a part of our church calendar. The reason for this is obvious: when we remember that the Christian church is found throughout the world, then we are faced with the question: "Which secular calendar shall we observe? Which New Year? How about the Chinese New Year?" Maybe we could even pick one of three or four calendars that are found within the pages of Scripture. Or perhaps, we could pick the fiscal year, which begins on July 1.

Needless to say, the calendar which is most pertinent to the life of the church is the liturgical calendar. The church marks her time and gears her life according to Christ and what He has done, not by what we happen to be doing. According to His calendar, which began on December 2, the First Sunday in Advent, today we remember the circumcision of our Saviour as a one-week-old infant. It is also a day to remember the name that He received on that occasion: the name Jesus, "the Lord saves," the name which crowns all of the year now gone, as well as the new year we are now entering.

The apostle Paul wanted the church at Philippi to know *the significance* of the name Jesus for her day-by-day life of faith. This congregation was near and dear to Paul's heart, and the feeling was mutual. The Philippian church was the first congregation that Paul started on the European continent. They loved Paul very dearly and showed their love by lending him support during his imprisonment in Rome. What was troubling Paul was that this congregation was having a hard time. It was very small; in spite of its overflowing generosity toward other Christians in need, it was very poor; and, most importantly, it was suffering persecution at the hands of both the Romans and the Jews. To these people labouring under such hard times Paul gives the only rock-solid comfort he could ever offer them. He tells them again of the name Jesus, which includes everything that Christ is, has done, and will do for them. He says, ⁹ **That is why God also has very highly exalted Him, and given Him the name that is above every other name,** ¹⁰ **that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven and on earth and under the earth may kneel,** ¹¹ **and that everyone may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

These words of Paul call to mind those words of the prophet Isaiah who once said, ²² *"Turn to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.* ²³ *I have sworn by Myself. A Word has gone out from My righteous mouth, and it will not be changed, that every knee will bow down to Me, and every tongue will swear allegiance,* (45:22-23).

But the *suffering* of the Philippian believers is not the heart of the matter. The question we must be asking is, how can the 21st century church endure troublesome times? How can the church deal with hard times? The answer is, not only can the church endure hard times; we can find our true glory in these times. Yes, we can even rejoice in those times with a joy that will not fade away no matter how hard those times become. Such joy is in the name Jesus and what it signifies. The answer is to be found in that *precise moment* when Jesus is truly being Jesus in the fullest sense of the term. Most specifically of all, the answer is to be found in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here is the way Paul puts it. Why has the Father in heaven **very highly exalted Him, and given Him the name that is above every other name?** Why is it ¹⁰ **that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven and on earth and under the earth may kneel?** Why is it **that everyone may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father?** Because Jesus did not use His equality with God to escape suffering. Instead, He made Himself nothing, took the very nature of a servant, was made in human likeness, and humbled Himself. Yes, He was being obedient to death, no more and no less than His death on the cross!¹

To the Lord Jesus Himself the cross always was and always will be His most glorious moment. It was His “hour,” His moment of truth, His hour of glory that no one could rob Him of. When He was lifted up on the cross, He was exalted above every other name in heaven and earth and under the earth. The cross marked His victory over sin, death, hell, and Satan. The glory of Jesus is the moment when the work of redemption and eternal salvation is complete, and He shouts, *“It is finished!”* It was on the cross that Jesus, “the Lord saves,” lived up to His wonderful name-above-all-names as He drew all people to Himself.

Now, when Jesus says that the cross is His most glorious moment, make no mistake about it, He really means it. He is not looking at His entire self-sacrificing work for us through some kind of rose-coloured glasses, as though He claims it is His glory but in fact He knows better. In all His Jesus-work for our sakes, He was not temporarily stepping outside His true self, becoming someone He was not, all the while longing for the time when He could become His true self once again. The cross really is His glory. It is the pure reflection of His true character. On Mt. Sinai God revealed to Moses that His true glory is His goodness and mercy. The glory of His Son, Jesus, is the same goodness and mercy, which can be summed up in one word, ***the cross.***

Nor does the resurrection of the Lord Jesus *diminish* the glory of Jesus’ victory on the cross! The resurrection testifies to the fact that the victory won at the cross was a real victory. The empty tomb shows us that each blessing won at the cross - every last one of them - has already started to flow to you and me.

With all these things in mind, the apostle Paul then turns his attention to the Philippians and to us. What about us? What about the hardships we will have to face in 2019? In the verses immediately surrounding our text Paul issues statements that make sense to us only when we view them in light of the cross. Just before our text he says, *“²⁷ Only let your conduct be worthy of the Good News of Christ... For it is God’s gift to you concerning Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ since you have the same struggle as you have seen me have, and as you now hear that I still have,”* (1:27, 29-30). Shortly after our text Paul says, *“However, even if I am being poured out like a drink offering while I am offering your faith as a sacrificial service, I am glad, and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ In the same way you should also be glad and rejoice with me!”* (2:17-18). And *“Have the same attitude as Christ Jesus had!”* (2:5).

By now the words of Paul should be crystal clear. As people who bear the name of Jesus, as people who have received through the cross all the blessings we could ever possibly need and desire for time and eternity, as people who have been baptised into Christ’s death and resurrection, we have become new people. As we take up our cross and follow Him, the cross is our glory too. As hymn 171 begins, *In the cross of Christ I glory.* It is not as though the life of service and sacrifice we lead in the name of Jesus *were* our glory; it really is our glory. We count it all as joy when we face various trials, because it really is our joy. Through the blood of the cross, we have already stepped outside of our old selves as lost and condemned sinners, and we have become a new forgiven people with the mindset and purpose of Jesus in our hearts.

What then shall we say about 2019? Again, Paul says it best: **“¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only when I have been with you but also even more now that I am absent, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling! ¹³ For it is God who continues to work in you both to be willing and to be doing according to his good purpose.”**

As baptised children of God, we already see emblazoned over the entire year 2019 the name above all names, the name of Jesus, our Saviour. In the new year we may not have to face times that were as tough as the Philippians faced. Then again, we might. But regardless of what happens, since you have been crucified and raised to new life with Christ, each and every day will be an occasion for joy. That is a promise from the very One who bears the name Jesus to those who bear the same name.

¹ Philippians 2:5-8

In this new year things will happen that will lead our weak flesh to worry. Indeed, events will cause us to tremble with fear, but, by God's grace, we will make it through them all. Even when we suffer for righteousness' sake, we will count it all joy. In all our sufferings we are only being true to our new selves re-created in the image of the Lord Jesus. Every pain we experience is nothing less than a partaking in the cross of Jesus, the very cross which means life for us. Every pain we endure is a reminder of all the blessings Jesus has won for us. In short, life under the cross is a wonderful, glorious thing.

How do you, to use Paul's words, "**continue to work out your salvation?**" By clinging to the cross, where Jesus has worked it all out for us. The fear and trembling come precisely at the moment we again realise that we can "work out" nothing by ourselves. But the trembling stops and gives way to perfect calm at the foot of the cross. There at the cross we look up and see the one named Jesus, "My Saviour!" We see the One who will always be His true self - always. Look at the blood, the tears, the agony. Never has the world seen such compassion, such forgiveness, such glory.

More pointedly, we return regularly to the foot of the cross as we adhere to the "*Word of life*," (v 16). Every time we return to that Word in 2019 we will be reminded of our true glory: His cross and our life under His cross. Every time we turn to that Word **with fear and trembling**, we will receive true peace in knowing that God is working out His good pleasure in us, and we will be directly linked to that cross as we receive the very body and blood of our Lord in His Supper.

2019 will be for us the "year of the cross." For us in this place, it will be a rejoicing in death - the death of Jesus, the Saviour. Just as we share in Jesus' death, we also share in His resurrection. In tears and in laughter the joy never ends. In Jesus our joy is as lasting as His glory. Because Jesus has taken our sins, God has declared us sinless in His sight. Because Jesus has paid for our guilt, we are set free. In God's marvellous great exchange, our sins were charged to Christ and His righteousness credited to us. By His humiliation Jesus has reconciled us to the God from whom we had been separated by our sins. Truly, His name is Jesus, for He has saved us from our sins. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR NEW YEAR'S DAY

Almighty and ever-living God, You have been our dwelling-place in all generations, and from everlasting to everlasting You are perfect in wisdom, power, and goodness. We worship You as our creator, protector, and provider, but, above all, for Your wonderful love in sending Your Son into the world to free us from sin for a life of joyous obedience to You.

We praise You, in particular, for the name given to Your holy Child, for it is a sign for all ages that Jesus alone is the source of all redemption and salvation for sinful mankind. We praise You that You have set Him at Your right hand in the heavenly realm, far above all rule, authority, power, and dominion, and above every other name, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. Help us always to hallow the name of Jesus by a living faith in Him, and by obedience to His teaching and example. Help us to trust in His death for us that our hope might be built on His blood and righteousness, and not on any efforts of our own.

We offer our thanks this day for the blessings of the past year and for the way You provided for our many needs. We thank You for family and friends, for home and harvest, for food and clothing, for health of mind and body, for work and leisure, for law and government, for peace and order, for our preservation in the faith, and for those precious hours in which we were able to worship and commune with You. Forgive us where we have sinned. Heal the hurt we have caused others. Forgive us the good we have left undone. Deliver us from the consequence of all our mistakes and transgressions.

Father in heaven, let Your blessing rest on us during the coming year, that we may grow in understanding of Your mercy in Christ, that in sorrow or joy we may know and accept Your loving will, that in prosperity or trial we may experience Your power working in us and know the hope to which You have called us. Give us Your Spirit so that everything we do or say may be done in the name of the Lord Jesus as we give thanks to You, our Father, through Him.

Be the shepherd of our youth, the guardian of all children, the health of the sick, and the support of the aged. Grant that in whatever happens to us we may see Your loving hand and have the sure confidence in Christ that in all things You work for good with those who love You.

Be the defender of Your people everywhere. Be the constant guard of our nation. Prosper us in everything that leads to peace and righteousness. Protect us from every evil of body and soul.

We ask these things in that one name in which there is salvation, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CIRCUMCISION AND NAME OF JESUS

(1 January)

Numbers 6:22-27

²² The LORD told Moses, ²³ “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is how you shall bless the people of Israel. Say to them: ²⁴ “The LORD bless you and keep you! ²⁵ The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you! ²⁶ The LORD look on you with favour and give you peace!”

²⁷ ““In this way they will put My name on the people of Israel and I shall bless them.””

Galatians 3:23-29

²³ Before the faith came, we were being imprisoned by the Law, locked up until the faith came, which was about to be revealed. ²⁴ Therefore, the Law was our guardian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. ²⁵ However, now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. ²⁶ For you are all the sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ because all of you who were baptised into Christ put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither slave nor free. There is neither male nor female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ Moreover, if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants and heirs according to the promise.

Luke 2:21

²¹ On the eighth day, when the time came to circumcise the Baby, He was named “Jesus,” the name that the angel had given Him before He was conceived in the womb.