

Sunday, November 19, 2023 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
Bible Study
“In Everything: Our Hymn of Grateful Praise”
Philippians 4:4-13

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, ask participants, “Briefly describe your favorite Thanksgiving Day from your past.”

Read Philippians 4:4-13

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn't make sense to you in the text?

Read Philippians 4:4-13 again -

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I will say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4). Who comes to your mind when you hear “rejoice”? Why do you think the person acts that way? What might you learn from the person?

“This is not to say, even here on the threshold of Thanksgiving, that there isn't room for grief or sadness. Suffering strikes even during the holiday season. Some might be dreading gathering with family, knowing there is pain there... We don't ask to accept the brokenness or endure abuse, but note that we see beyond the pain of the moment to a wholeness that is offered. We give thanks for the promises of God, even when we can't feel them at the moment”.

- How have you experienced this? Can you think of someone who needs to hear those words? How might you reach out to them?

“Joy, says Paul, is revealed in gentleness, in how we treat those around us, in how we respond to slights against us, and in how we reach out to those who are hurt. *“Let your gentleness be known to everyone,”* says Paul. **Let it show. Joy is found in the knowledge and experience of the nearness of God** (The Lord is near), a nearness that diminishes anxiety and brings out a willingness to connect with God with gratitude and with hope (in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God). Joy is found in that communion, that peaceful confidence that comes from living in Christ”.

- What would it look like to live this way?

“I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances, I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need” (Philippians 4:12). “Approximately 842 million people are estimated to be suffering from food insecurity or chronic hunger, regularly not getting enough nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life” (<https://umcmission.org/advance-project/982920/>). “More than 34 million people in the US face hunger, including 1 in 9 children” (<https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america>).

- As you prepare for the Thanksgiving feast, how could you and your church give thanks to God by helping those who are hungry?

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Share prayer requests and respond appropriately.

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, end by praying the following or a similar prayer:

Gracious and loving God, we give thanks for your many blessings in our lives. We rejoice in You always, finding our joy in the Lord. We pray that your peace, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds as we bring our anxieties to You. In Thanksgiving week, help us cultivate a spirit of thankfulness in our daily lives and express our gratitude not only in words but also in our actions. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord’s Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven
hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.