

Joyful & Generous

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

I love my church, I love my church. The previous church that we, Leanne and I, were at, a guy got that sticker made up as a bumper sticker. He custom printed them, and he handed them out.

He said, I love my church, CBC, Caringbah Baptist Church, and people would put them on their bumper stickers.

I have a feeling that if the Apostle Paul was so inclined, and he had a car, he might have custom printed some bumper stickers that said, I love the Philippian Church.

because it would seem that the Church of Philippi on the eastern coast of Macedonia, they were actually his favourite church.

The churches that he interacted with were many, but he seemed to have a very soft spot in his heart for the church at Philippi. Churches are different, aren't they? Have you ever noticed that?

They're different in their health. If you read in the New Testament, you notice the churches are different. In Revelation, we talk here about Laodicea.

They were lukewarm and they had a problem with that. The Church of Corinth were worldly and it seems rife with sexual immorality. The Church of Ephesus had its own problems.

The Church is scattered throughout modern-day Turkey, which is Galatia. You saw it on the map. They seem to be quite legalistic.

They had a spirit of religiosity. It's the same today. Not every church is the same.

And if you have tried to find a new church, you probably know that sometimes it's a challenge. And maybe some of you are here today doing exactly this, trying to find out where God is leading you, what church to be part of.

I like to believe that NorthernLife is a healthy church. In fact, it's a great church. Of course, I am so biased, just like some of you.

But NorthernLife, I believe we are a faithful and fruitful church. And I think the Lord thinks so too.

And I think that there's a reason for us to study the Book of Philippians, that we're not quite sure of what exactly that is, but that will become clear. I normally work a year in advance with the preaching calendar, so we know what's coming up.

And so we were coming today was going to be the beginning of 6260. It was planned out from the beginning of the year.

And like we did with Luke Acts, the plan was to preach ten different sermons that spread over the whole of the New Testament to coincide with the reading of the New Testament. And so a month ago, I came to start working on this new series.

And as strange as it sounds, I just didn't have motivation, which is a confession that I feel guilty about. How could you not be motivated to teach an overarching sermon series on the whole of the New Testament? But I did it.

I felt like, oh, we've sort of did this at Luke Acts earlier in the year. And immediately, I felt compelled, really did compelled that we should study Philippians.

And I opened up Philippians and I was just, I don't know, I had this real sense that it was the right thing to do.

Now, of course, we just saw in that amazing sketch that the young people did, Paul ended up at Philippi for a similar reason, didn't he?

He was, let me read from Acts 16, Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Frigia and Galatia, again, that's in Turkey, having been kept, because the Spirit was guiding them, kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the Word in the

province of Asia. When they came to the border of Myzia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to, and he actually guided them over to Philippi.

So I know it sounds cheeky, but I'm honestly believing that God who loves his church, he loves us just as much as he loves the church of Philippi. And I think he guided me in my role to Philippians.

So I'm just trusting that there's a really important reason for us to sit as a church in the book of Philippians. It starts in verse one.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's people, God's holy people, in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons, grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippi is a Roman colony in ancient Macedonia. It was the first church in Eastern Europe that Paul planted. And it was full of retired Roman soldiers.

So to say that they were uber patriotic would be an understatement, which probably explains why there was some fierce persecution when a group of Christians came in and said, there's another Lord, there's another king other than the emperor.

Paul most probably is in Rome when he's writing the book of Philippians, the letter of Philippians. He's under house arrest, and he has just received a generous gift from the generous church of Philippi that he started some period of time before.

He receives this gift from a guy called epaphroditus. And Paul has written Philippians, given the letter to epaphroditus, to take all the way back to the church of Philippi. And that's what we have in our hands today.

Paul is utterly and completely focused on the gospel, isn't he? Have you noticed that? He is focused on the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you hear people talk about the gospel, or they might say, you might be looking for a church who preaches the gospel. It flows off the tongue. They preach the gospel.

What does that even mean? Well, it means that we make much of Jesus Christ, his life, death and resurrection. Amen?

That is preaching the gospel. His life, death and resurrection changes everything. It is good news.

Romans, the letter to Romans, the Romans says, it is the power of God under salvation for all who would believe. It is absolutely essential for every human being to make right their relationship with God. It is through the gospel.

There is no other way than through what Jesus did in his life, death and resurrection. Peter says in 1 Peter 1 12, that angels, they hang around the gospel. They look at it and they just desire, they long to understand it.

It says they ponder and look at it. The word is actually they lust over it, which sounds awful, but they desire to understand the gospel. The angels do.

Now, angels are the most glorious beings under God. I mean, we could often, we are more special, it would seem, human beings to God, but this side of the resurrection, if an angel turned up, many of us would want to bow down and worship them.

Would you agree? That's what happens in scripture multiple times. The angels turn up.

They're so glorious that human beings go, they must be God. But the angels say, don't worship me. These glorious beings long to look into and understand what we can become familiar with, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

So may we, as we study Philippians, be filled with a renewed passion and appreciation and glory in the gospel. Amen. God himself has become 2,000 years ago a human being.

He has tabernacled amongst us in human flesh, lived the perfect life that we could never live, and he has died in our place and risen from the grave. And that changes humanity.

Faith in Christ will set you free because the son says you are free, you will be free indeed. This is the gospel. The church at Philippi understood the gospel.

They understood the gospel. That's the big thing that Paul is thrilled about. And out of the gospel, they found this joy and out of the gospel, they found this generosity.

He begins the beginning of his letter and he commends his favorite church by saying, and I'm summarizing, I commend your gospel joy, your gospel unity and your gospel love. That's where he goes straight off the bat.

I commend you, you're a good church. I commend your gospel joy, your gospel unity and your gospel love. Gospel joy, verse three, Paul writes, I thank my God every time I remember you.

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Being confident of this, remember he's writing from a prison cell to this church he loves.

I am confident that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

I know this might sound a little bit trivial for those of you who are going through a really hard time, but have you discovered the power of smiling? Have you discovered the power of smiling? Some of us smile more than others.

But on a Sunday morning, I get up early and I feel a sense of apprehension. You might think, oh, how could you do that? You're a minister of the gospel.

How lucky are you? I feel incredibly fortunate, but I also feel a sense of tension and nervousness, anxiety, especially if I have to stand up like this and give another talk from the Bible. There's a sense of burden and stress weighing on me.

And I also have a great expectation that God might do anything today. And that gives me a sense of tension. So when I'm driving to the ministry center, I often smile.

I just stop and say, Lord, whatever stress I feel, today is a day to partner with you and the people of God in the ministry of the gospel. What a thrill. How good is that?

And, you know, sometimes we go through seasons of life where you can't even muster a smile. And if you're in that place, I'm so sorry. But I think you know what I'm saying.

There is a profound joy in the gospel. And I think Paul is remembering what that wonderfully done skit told us. I think when he's writing to the church at Philippi, he's remembering Acts 16, verse 11, from Troas.

He remembers they put out to sea and sailed straight for for Samothrace and the next day we went on to Neapolis, telling the story of going from Turkey over to Macedonia, the top of Greece there. We stayed there several days, verse 13.

On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there, and Lydia becomes a Christian. Lydia gives her life to Christ.

What joy there is in being part of the gospel going forth. Amen? Has anyone ever led someone to Christ in the room?

Look around. Those of you who are evangelistically inclined, please do so, because not many of us have that testimony often in a group of people like us.

But there's incredible joy, a key to a great church's gospel joy, and that joy is built around this idea that Paul says, we are partnering in gospel work. We're partnering with God's Spirit. We're partnering with the gospel itself.

We're partnering with one another as we are working and doing the good works that God has prepared and advanced for us to do. I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Here he is in Rome, in prison. Things haven't turned out exactly like the way he might have thought they would have turned out. But he still finds joy and he commends the Philippian church for their joy.

I think there's joy to be found when you remind yourself God is at work in ways that I don't understand. Amen. That's how you find joy.

It's like, I may not be able to understand what's going on, I am limited in my power, but God is not limited and he's at work. He's doing something. I began full-time ministry as a youth, young adult pastor.

And my first full-time job was at Carrying Bow Baptist Church. And we used to take camps, lots of youth camps and often they were specifically surf camps. So they went on the coast and many of us were surfers.

So we had this one camp in Gerringong. Anyone been to the campsite at Gerringong? Many of us know it.

So we're down there with 80, 100 kids. And that was a terrible camp. I get the Mozambique.

I, Johnny English, I twitch when I think of the Gerringong surf camp. There was no dishwasher apart from people. And they didn't do that good a job of dishwashing.

And there was this vomiting bug that had come down. And the children were sinful. I know we're born from sinful from birth, but these were extra sinful.

These young people, like, I won't even go into the things they did. And there was a kissing frenzy going on amongst the year nines. And a vomiting bug.

So Paul Leanne was catering back then with another mum. And Haley was in her womb. Our daughter Haley was, Leanne was pregnant.

Anyway, we were preaching the gospel every morning and every night. A maid of mine was doing it. And that was going over like a lead balloon.

Like that was hard work. And so we got to the end of it. We said, OK, that's a learning experience of suffering.

And it went down in history as the infamous Geringon Camp. So ten years on, I'm sitting at the front of Carimbab Baptist Church, and there's this guy in front of me. I've never seen him before.

But he's, he's built. He's got two foot wide shoulders, and he's 24 years old, and he turns around and he's six foot three. He's a big athletic guy.

He turns around and he says, Hi. And I go, Hello, nice to meet you. He goes, It's Joel.

His big smile with red hair. And I'm like, do we know each other? He goes, Joel.

Joel from Year Eight Scripture. You invited me to the camp. What camp?

The Jer... The Jerringong camp. I'm like, Joel as in little Joel, two foot high Joel with orange hair and the big smile.

Yeah, that's me. And he goes, I got saved that night that Elliot preached the gospel. And I've been following Jesus ever since.

And I fell off the chair. Nothing good came from that awful, infamous camp. But it did.

because God is at work in ways that we can't see. And the gospel is the power of God unto salvation for all who would believe, whether it's a challenging camp or whatever you're going through. There is joy to be found in the gospel.

Amen. There really is. There's joy to be found.

And God is at work here at Philippi. And he's at work at NorthernLife. Downstairs now, there's kids ministry going on.

There's youth ministry happening. There's ministry happening here. There's going to be ministry happening on the floor of fellowship having a cup of tea.

God is at work. And if we're going to be a healthy church, we need to take joy in that. We're partnering with life-changing work that God is doing.

And he's often using us to do it. Paul moves on to gospel unity. It is right for me, he writes, to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart.

And whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. Paul begins all these letters by saying grace to you.

And he finishes his letters by saying grace be with you. It's this obvious sense that grace goes before us and behind us and above and around.

And it's a wonderful picture that we need the grace of God in the gospel, in our lives, in our church, all the time. Paul says, whether we're in chains, and some of us feel like the season we're in is a chained up season, that we're inhibited.

It's just, it's just hard. And sometimes life is like that. Or maybe we're explaining and even defending the truth in the cut and thrust of our lives, the truth of the gospel.

That's a great prayer to pray at the beginning of the day. Lord, let me be used to defend and explain the gospel today. May my life confirm the gospel, to someone, good prayer.

But whatever we're doing with our lives as followers of Jesus, we share in God's grace. It's not our power. Certainly that camp had nothing to do.

We were at our limit, really at our limit. But God was at work and we are sharing in His grace. Paul says to the Corinthian Church, His grace is what, starting with S?

Sufficient. His grace is sufficient. Pick up the all of yous here or notice them in verses seven and eight.

There are three times Paul feels joy over all of you. Gospel unity. He shares God's grace with all of you.

He affectionately longs to see all of you, all of you, all of us. We have been together through a worldwide pandemic. And we have learned, if we didn't already know, that viruses are contagious, they are contagious.

They move one to another through spreading. And you'd see it on the map, on the TV, that it would be in a country and then it would jump the border and it would be over here and then it would jump a sea and come to another island.

And that's what viruses do. Christianity is contagious. It's a partnership.

We're in it together. Gospel unity is required. There's a diversity required for the gospel to be spread across all sorts of different people.

Amen. We need each other. And we saw this in the text and in the skit.

The gospel starts in Philippi with a wealthy fabric trader. Purple cloth trader named Lydia. Faith spreads through her household.

It's contagious. Acts 16, as it did to the jailer and his family. Acts 16, 16 to 18.

And then it seems it would also spread to the slave girl. Acts 16, 28. Great churches experience gospel unity.

And that gospel unity is this idea that we are all stuck in sin. We need a Saviour. Every one of us.

There's no one on a higher ground saying, I'm a bit closer. I need less of His grace. No, all of you, all of us need a Saviour.

And the picture of baptism, so often we find, and certainly with Lydia, she's baptized as the first thing she does. It's a symbol, a mime of the gospel, of unity, isn't it? That's why we have believers' baptism that we believe in this church.

Someone puts their faith in Christ. They are born again by God's grace and through the gospel. And we say, why don't you get baptized?

Buried under the water as a believer, and in being buried, I'm testifying that Christ has died for my sin. And as I come out of the water, I'm rising by faith with him, and I will rise after I die with a new body. It's a uniting symbol, baptism.

And because God has a sense of humour, it doesn't matter whether you have wonderful makeup on, and you're very beautiful. After you go through that water as a baptism, it's all running. And God goes, I got you.

You're all the same. Gospel unity. And maybe you have a fantastic hairdo.

It's your glory. After the baptism, it's not going to look any good. It's just all going to...

We're all equal. Maybe your clothes are the best clothes you could ever buy after you get baptised if you're wearing them. It doesn't matter.

We are all on the same level. Baptism is a leveler. Amen.

And it's just a symbol of what is happening as we come under the sound of the gospel. We all need a saviour. That's gospel unity.

I wanted to do something. Yeah, we've got time, I think. Something a bit different.

If you guys could race around with the mics. We are blessed here in this church in Hornsby with the diversity of the cultural backgrounds that we have here.

And to celebrate this gospel unity because God loves our church, like he loves the Philippian Church.

I wonder if these guys could race around with a microphone and you could just not give a testimony, just 20 seconds, you could say where you're from, if you're from somewhere other than australia, but if you're from australia, go for it, that's good

too. But if you just to hear some different languages to say, I'm from so and so, and if you're a Christian in your mother tongue, say, Jesus is my Lord and Saviour. Isn't that a highlight of the year? That is so good.

I knew that would be good, but that surprised me how many, how diverse we are. Praise God. How lucky are we to share in the reality of the gospel going forth to all nations?

Gospel joy and gospel unity. So what is the unity we have? In all these languages, we say, Jesus is my Lord and Saviour.

It's the church birthed in Acts, isn't it? Speaking in all sorts of languages, declaring the praises of God. And what we want to be saying is gospel love.

The last part, verse 9, this is my prayer that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.

In all these different languages, but there would be knowledge and depth of insight of the gospel, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes

through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. This is what Paul prays for his beloved Philippian church. I pray that your love may abound more and more. More how?

In knowledge and depth of insight. He prays that they could love more as they understand more. Love more as you understand more.

It takes us to Luke chapter 7. Jesus is at a Pharisee's house and this sinful woman that people knew that it was a sinful woman. That's what the text uses to describe her.

We would imagine she's a prostitute. She comes in and she comes up to Jesus and everyone's sort of, you know, looking down their noses at this. And she starts weeping on his feet and wiping his feet with her hair.

Then she takes anointing perfume and anoints his feet. And the Pharisees take a bit of humbridge. That was the word I was going to say.

I thought that sounds too uppity. It takes humbridge to this going on and says, you know, if you were a prophet, you would know this is not a woman that you would allow to do that. But what does Jesus say back?

She has experienced great love. That's the reason she's showing great love. There's a connection between understanding the love demonstrated in the gospel to me and how much I can love others.

So as a church, NorthernLife, we need to comprehend the power of the gospel, how much we have been loved by God in Christ through what he has done in his life, death and resurrection so that we can love others in Jesus' name.

We need to grow in our revelation. You know, I'm really proud of Hamish. Didn't he do a great job, a kids coordinator?

I'm also proud of the fact that he's learning the Philippians off by heart. He said, I've got chapter one down and I'm putting it out there. I'm going to learn the whole book of Philippians.

And so more power to him in doing that. He's trying to do it so that he can learn the gospel in knowledge and depth of insight, so that he could then love more deeply. So well done, Hamish.

Paul prays that the Philippian Church would grow in their understanding with deeper revelation, so that they would be able to discern what is best. So wisdom comes from an understanding of the love of God in the gospel. And what is that?

Theologically speaking, we are enemies of God because of our sin. We cannot be with a holy God. Paul says that you understand that you are blameless in Christ, Philippians.

You understand that. You are righteous. How does that even happen?

They're very theological terms. Well, something happened. It's called the divine exchange.

We could not live the life that was good enough, perfect enough to allow us to be in relationship with a holy God. So Christ has done it for us. He's lived the perfect life.

And then, strangely, wonderfully, curiously, he took that perfect life with perfect blood and was hung up on a cross to pay a sinner's death. He took a sinner's punishment. He exchanged lives with me by faith.

He took what I deserved, death, so that by faith in him, I could get what he deserved, a completely right relationship with the father. That's the divine exchange. That's the gospel.

Don't get used to it, friends. We need it every day. Christ has died in our place.

And faith in him makes us right with God. Blameless. In fact, pure and blameless.

Gospel love makes it harder for us to have contempt for others, doesn't it? It's just harder. The more you focus on gospel love, demonstrated by God through Christ for me, it's just harder to hold others with a lack of forgiveness.

Gospel love prevents us from being prone to correct others quickly, to look for specks of dust all the time. When you know with depth of insight, thank you, Lord, you took that big plank out of my eye.

If I have to poke, point out a speck of dust, let me do it with a lot of grace and love. Gospel love unites and produces joy. I love my church.

Do you? I love my church. because I think we make much regularly, weekly, not just here, but throughout the week, in our workplaces and where we study, and as we gather together in small group gatherings, we make much of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if you're looking for a church that's a good church, that's what you should be looking for. because he says, if you lift me up, I'm gonna draw people unto God. Keep lifting me up high.

And so I think we do do that, and we're not perfect at it, but we want to. And I think we're good at welcoming the stranger, and that's what Christians are meant to do.

And if you're new today, I promise you, you will not stand somewhere for more than about 30 seconds. Put me to the test. Don't let us down, guys.

No one can stand for 30 seconds. But honestly, I'm not even joking. It is a church that welcomes people in the name of Jesus.

And I think we are doing a good job by God's grace at crossing the street in community ministry and trying to love in the name of Jesus. And I think we're doing a pretty good job in partnering with good people, doing kingdom work across the globe.

So across the street and across the globe, we're doing this work. And we've been doing it not in a flash in the plan way. We've been doing it for over 120 years, standing on the shoulders of giants.

I believe we are generous. I believe we are joy-filled. And just like the church in Philippi, I believe we are unified and we are passionate about Jesus.

We're diverse. We saw that. And we are disciples.

We're learners. We're worshipers from a place of grace and gratitude. And we're workers.

You need the mix. And do you know what else? Look around.

We're in a season of growth. And churches don't always experience that, but we are, by God's grace. Something special is happening in church, and we appreciate being part of it.

Amen. My prayer is regularly, Lord, can I be part, can we be part of something that we can tell others about for a couple of years to come and say, that was God breathing on us. That was just a touch of revival.

We got to do things that were enjoyable in Jesus' name. It was great. With all the challenges of life and church, we're called to love God, love others, and make disciples of Jesus.

And if you're wondering whether you're welcome for the journey, you are. You are welcome for the journey. We want to do something really worthy of the glory of Jesus' name in this church, NorthernLife, in the years to come.

And all the people said, so be it. Lord God, we do commit ourselves to you with grateful hearts. Lord, would you help us through the gospel to find the joy that is unspeakable?

Lord, would you help us appreciate unity? We claim John 17, the prayer, Lord Jesus, that you prayed to the Father. You said make them one as we are one.

And we pray that we could get amongst that. Lord, could we have uncommon unity in the gospel? And Lord, thank you so much that today is a day that you've made for us to celebrate and declare Christ came and died for us sinners.

And love has been once and for all demonstrated. In its fullest measure. May we know your love, gospel love, so that we can love others in Jesus' name, amen.