

“Satisfied with Your Life?”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney – April 3, 2022

Philippians 3:4-14 – John 12:1-8

A Quaker once posted a sign on one of the choicest fields of his farm. It stated, "This land will be given to the first truly satisfied person who passes this way." He no sooner arrived back at his house than a man knocked at his door.

“Sir,” he said, "I just saw your sign and I want you to know that I am a completely satisfied man. I have a devoted family, a successful business, financial security for the future and I am in excellent health."

The old Quaker looked his visitor over very carefully and then said, "Pray tell me, friend, if thou art completely satisfied man, why dost thou want my land?"

Today’s epistle reading, the apostle asks the same question

“Are you satisfied with your life?”

Paul had no regrets - he was totally satisfied with "knowing Christ."

EVERYTHING IS WORTHLESS, the Apostle says in v.8, *WHEN COMPARED TO THE PRICELESS GEM OF KNOWING CHRIST JESUS, MY LORD.*

Do you think he is right?

The fundamental question of this morning’s epistle is “*WHAT COUNTS IN YOUR LIFE?*”

Do you count more because you were born? Are you important because of what you have achieved? Or are you who you are because you know Christ?

For the apostle Paul it is not what you have done, but what God has done - and will do - for you that counts.

Paul knew what he was talking about because humanly speaking he was a success. He had the right pedigree, and his achievements were sweet.

We read in *Philippians 3:5-6* of Paul's tremendous credentials as a Jewish leader:
His Jewish background:

Circumcised on the 8th day,
of the people of Israel,
from the tribe of Benjamin,
a Hebrew of Hebrews.

His successes:

In regard to the law, Paul was a Pharisee.

As to zeal, he persecuted the church - and successfully at that.

As to legalistic righteousness, faultless.

He had studied under the famous Rabbi Gamaliel (Ga **mA le** al) – and was probably a member of the Jewish Elite – the Sanhedrin – before his Damascus Road experience.

Paul had something to be proud about. In the worldly sense, he was a success.

Yet in *Philippians 3:8* he says: *WHAT IS MORE, I CONSIDER EVERYTHING A LOSS COMPARED TO THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF KNOWING CHRIST JESUS MY LORD, FOR WHOSE SAKE I HAVE LOST ALL THINGS. I CONSIDER THEM RUBBISH THAT I MAY GAIN CHRIST.*

In fact, Paul calls all his whole success DUNG. That is the strength of the word translated in the NIV as “rubbish.”

Instead of looking to the past, Paul tells the Christians to look to the future. Knowing Christ is an ongoing experience.

Paul encourages them to follow his example.

In *Philippians 3:17* he says: *JOIN WITH OTHERS IN FOLLOWING MY EXAMPLE, BROTHERS AND TAKE NOTE OF THOSE WHO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN WE GAVE YOU.*

What was Paul's example?

He puts it very well earlier in the Letter to the Philippians

For me, to live is Christ, to die is gain . . . (Phil: 1:21)

But it isn't just Paul and the early church leaders who led sacrificial lives.

One man I admire greatly is Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941).

Maximilian Kolbe was a Catholic priest, who on May 28, 1941, was transferred to the concentration camp at Auschwitz.

During his time there, he shared his meager rations of food with those around him who were hungry.

Kolbe had a forgiving heart, and he would plead with the prisoners to forgive their persecutors and overcome evil with good.

A Protestant Doctor who treated the patients in Kolbe's block said that Kolbe would not let himself be treated before any other prisoners in that block. He sacrificed himself for the good of the other prisoners. The doctor said: "From my observations, the virtues in this Servant of God were no momentary impulse - such as are often found in men. They sprang from a habitual practice, deeply woven into his personality."

One day, a man in Kolbe's block escaped. All of the men from that block were brought out into the hot sun and made to stand there all day with no food or drink.

At the end of the day, the man who had escaped had not been found. So, the Nazi commandant told the assembled prisoners that ten men would be selected to die in the starvation cell - in place of the one that had escaped.

One man, a Polish sergeant (Francis Gajowniczek) was one of those selected. He begged the commandant to be spared because he was worried for his family.

As he was pleading with the commandant, Maximilian Kolbe silently stepped forward and stood before the commandant.

The commandant turned to him and said sneeringly asked, "What does this Polish pig want?"

Kolbe pointed to the Polish sergeant and said, "I am a Catholic priest from Poland; I would like to take his place, because he has a wife and children."

The commandant stood silent for a moment. He then nodded, allowing the sergeant to go back to his place in the ranks and Kolbe took his place in the starvation bunker.

Each day the guards used to come and remove the bodies of those who had died. However, instead of the usual sounds of screaming, all they could hear were the sounds of Kolbe and the others in the bunker singing hymns and praying.

When Kolbe couldn't speak any longer due to hunger and lack of energy, he would whisper his prayers.

After two weeks, the cell had to be cleared out for more prisoners. Only four prisoners were left, and Kolbe was one of them. They injected each with a lethal injection and on August 14, 1941, Kolbe paid the ultimate price.

Kolbe had learned what St. Paul meant when he said: *“EVERYTHING IS WORTHLESS WHEN COMPARED TO THE PRICELESS GEM OF KNOWING CHRIST JESUS, MY LORD.”*

Knowing Christ means living the Christian life – so much so that nothing else matters.

Knowing Christ means serving Him and those around us – even to the point of losing one's life itself for Jesus' sake.