St. Matthew's Lutheran Church & School – Oconomowoc, WI
Sermon 3 – Joyful Generosity Series
Philippians 4:14-20
May 24, 2026

Sermon: Philippians 4:14-20
Joyful and Generous Doesn't Just Happen

There is a place that claims to be the most magical place on earth. Some of you have been there. You have vacationed there or maybe you have plans to visit the magic this summer. It's not Oconomowoc, that's a close second; it is Disney World. Everything is designed with purpose and precision at Disney world from the moment you arrive on the property. One of the goals of Disney World is when you arrive from that moment on you will have everything you need on their paradise property. If you stay at one of the 29,000 hotel rooms on the property there is no need to get back in your car until the day you return to reality at the end of vacation. The room will be as close to your home away from home as they can get it. The dining experiences will be flawless. The theme parks will fill your days with fun, and you will not want to leave. They work hard to ensure their guests have a flawless experience. However, that doesn't just happen. A look behind the scenes reveals there is a hidden labyrinth of tunnels, corridors, rooms, and warehouses underneath the ground at Disney. How do you ensure the Micky Mouse pretzels with cheese are constantly available throughout the day and never run out? Whenever a restaurant in the parks needs more, they are delivered through the tunnels underneath to keep people properly pretzeled. How does Elsa sing "Let it Go" at one stage in the park and 20 minutes later is greeting guests on the other end of the park? The hidden magic of golf carts zipping underground and coordinating where Elsa and the other 80,000 characters need to be. If you have been there, have you ever wondered why rides never seem to be closed? They have thousands of engineers and maintenance techs on hand every day so if there is an aspect of an attraction that needs maintenance, they can do it in real time as it operates. The perception of paradise on earth doesn't just happen. A flawless guest experience doesn't accidently take place. There is a reason Disney World is one of the most visited vacation destinations in the world. The logistics of creating that reality are mind boggling. They have people walk through the parks and their only job is to watch the crowds and identify potential problems and work to fix them before they become problems. Creating the most magical place in the world is intensely intentional every single day.

If creating the illusion of paradise at the most magical place on earth is that important to put that much intention and purpose into it to convince people to spend a week there, then what about what God tells us when it comes to actual paradise that isn't a week but is forever and it's not an illusion but it is reality? What does God have to say to us today about the opportunities we have to serve him and our neighbor when it comes to something so important and vital as eternity and what gets us there.

Paul gives us insight into the relationship had had with his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in the city of Philippi. A refresher on Paul's time in that city. It wasn't a time filled with wishing upon a star and riding teacups. It was the place Paul was arrested because he drove a demon out of a girl and those that were making money from her didn't appreciate that very much, so they had Paul arrested and to make their stay a little less comfortable he and his companion Silas were beaten. It was in Philippi that Paul baptized the jailer and his entire family upon his release. Paul continued his mission journey to the next city of Thessalonica. This was nothing out of the ordinary for Paul. What was out of the ordinary is that when he went to preach in the next city the Christians at Philippi sent him support for his gospel ministry. In fact, he says they were the only church to do this, and they did it on multiple occasions. They did it when he was in Thessalonica, in Corinth, and more help was coming.

Paul's current circumstances as he writes to the Philippians were not good. He was writing while under arrest. He was arrested in Jerusalem; he appealed to Caesar as a Roman citizen for his trial and now he sits in Rome waiting to go before a judge. What did the Philippians do? Once again, they see to Paul's needs. They send Epaphroditus to Rome to supply him in his circumstance. What does Paul say about their generosity? He puts into clear focus who they were actually serving, and it wasn't him. It was the sweet sacrifice of service to God. What did it take for them to serve in this way? This service didn't just happen. The Philippians seeing to Paul's needs wasn't caring by coincidence. Epaphroditus didn't just say, "Well, I was in the neighborhood anyway to see the Roman Coliseum and so I thought I'd just stop by and see how Paul was doing while in custody. It wasn't as if they asked Paul, "Well, what do you need? We will just Venmo it over to you in five minutes. This support of the gospel ministry as Paul continues to share the gospel was intentional. They set out to do this. They made plans to do this. They send Epaphroditus hundreds of miles over months to do this. This was also regular. They continued to support the preaching of the gospel. It was ongoing support as the kingdom of God continued to grow through gospel work.

Do we do the same? Are we intentional, and because we are intentional are we also regular with our support of the gospel ministry? Or are we content with it happening by coincidental circumstances? What do we give our attention and support to intentionally and regularly? It has been said that you only need to look at two things to show priorities, calendar and finances. How do you use them? How does the family calendar look? Does it look like a game of Chutes and Ladders, and you need to be in this space in this time and how is that going to work because I must be at baseball practice simultaneously? No problem, I've got it figured out, I just need to build a time warp machine to break the space-time continuum between now and next week. Sometimes it feels like that. How do we use the finances that God has blessed us with. Think of all the things that we set up to pay on time in the correct amounts or the late fees and overdraft fees are going to build up quickly. What do we use it on? As a nation we have $1.68 trillion in car loans that averages out to the average car payment per vehicle of $700/month. Our nation has an average mortgage payment of $2,900. The average monthly roll over credit card balance of $6,300. What does all of this have in common? All of that takes a lot of trust, doesn't it? In each case you are promising that I will pay that money back over a certain amount of time and I will even give you more back than what you gave me. That's a big promise to make with resources in the future that you have not received today and do not have on hand today. The issue isn't with any of these things. That is not the point. The point is our attitude and trust when it comes to giving to God what is already his. Do I have more trust in my ability to keep the promise that I make to a lending institution with resources I don't even have yet than I do trusting in God's promises with what he has already given me? Say it ain't so.

Look at the truth that God puts before us today. *"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19).* As the Philippians supported the gospel ministry Paul reminds them first what they have been given and what God continues to do. We have been given Christ. What does that mean? It means when we are plagued with mistrust and temptations that God isn't going to keep his promises like Adam and Eve, Abraham, Peter when Jesus is arrested, that Jesus has taken those sins and carried them to the cross. It means when the sinful nature wants to win the selfish vs. service tug-of-war in my heart Jesus has already carried that failure to the cross. It means that when my priorities are poorly positioned in life Jesus took my position and suffered the wrath of God and instead gives me riches of his grace, the love he gives me freely that I don't deserve.

He gives us the gift of the Spirit, as we remember on this Pentecost Day. The Spirit that gives the gift of faith through the Word and sacrament of baptism. The Spirit that continues to strengthen my faith through Jesus' body and blood shed for me. The Spirit that works through God's Word because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. The Spirit that enables me to see all that God has given me and to joyfully and generously give to him what is only his in the first place. In Christ the debt of sin has been paid in full. In Christ I have everything because in him I have a Savior that gives me everything.

What does this mean? It sets you and me free to serve God and neighbor. It sets me free knowing my needs are met in him. It sets me free to intentionally and regularly support his gospel work. That is every day with every opportunity. That is why we are having our commitment Sunday next week and you received the materials for that. It isn't about that day, but it's about being intentional with our support for gospel ministry with an opportunity to first reflect on all that God has given to us to bless us and to be a blessing to others. Then, how can I support his kingdom work with our time, the gifts he has given, and our offerings.

We are not talking about a pretend paradise on earth with Micky Mouse ears. Ultimately, we are talking about paradise forever through Christ. How amazing it is that God lets you and me be a part of it just like the Philippians were two thousand years ago. We have those same boundless opportunities today. If Disney World things it's that important to be intentional about guests at Magic Kingdom, how much more so should we be intentional with the Kingdom of God? Amen.