

# SERMON ON THE MOUNT MENNNITE CHURCH

September 12, 2021

JOY SUBVERTS

## Lighting the Peace Lamp

### Call to worship (Psalm 66:1-4)

Leader: Shout for joy to God, all the earth!  
People: Sing the glory of his name; make his praise glorious.  
Leader: Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!  
People: So great is your power that your enemies cringe before you.  
All: All the earth bows down to you;  
they sing praise to you, they sing the praises of your name."

**Invocation** VT 866

**Hymn** VT 436 O Lord My God / How Great Thou Art

**Scripture** Philippians 3 (on reverse side)

**Meditation** VT 541 Listen in the Silence

- Philippians 3 is a problematic text, particularly when read from the perspective of Jewish/Christian relationships. We must acknowledge that many times Christians have used state power to bring harm to Jewish communities, while often appealing to Scripture to justify it.
- Could Paul be speaking in metaphor and analogy as a way to circumvent Roman censorship? Remember that Paul is imprisoned and his correspondence is probably being monitored.
- N.T. Wright says (in "Paul's Gospel):  
If Paul's answer to Caesar's empire is the empire of Jesus, what does that say about this new empire, living under the rule of its new lord? It implies a high and strong ecclesiology, in which the scattered and often muddled cells of women, men, and children loyal to Jesus as Lord form colonial outposts of the empire that [are] to be subversive little groups when seen from Caesar's point of view, but when seen Jewishly, an advance foretaste of the time when the earth shall be filled with the glory of the God of Abraham and the nations will join Israel in singing God's praises.

## Sharing / Prayer

### Offering

### Announcements

**Hymn** VT 816 Guide My Feet

**Benediction** As we go from this gathered worship, may we go rejoicing in the Lord, as we press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

### Philippians 3 (*The Message*)

And that's about it, friends. Be glad in God! I don't mind repeating what I have written in earlier letters, and I hope you don't mind hearing it again. Better safe than sorry—so here goes.

<sup>2-6</sup> Steer clear of the barking dogs, those religious busybodies, all bark and no bite. All they're interested in is appearances—knife-happy circumcisers, I call them. The *real* believers are the ones the Spirit of God leads to work away at this ministry, filling the air with Christ's praise as we do it. We couldn't carry this off by our own efforts, and we know it—even though we can list what many might think are impressive credentials. You know my pedigree: a legitimate birth, circumcised on the eighth day; an Israelite from the elite tribe of Benjamin; a strict and devout adherent to God's law; a fiery defender of the purity of my religion, even to the point of persecuting the church; a meticulous observer of everything set down in God's law Book.

<sup>7-9</sup> The very credentials these people are waving around as something special, I'm tearing up and throwing out with the trash—along with everything else I used to take credit for. And why? Because of Christ. Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him. I didn't want some petty, inferior brand of righteousness that comes from keeping a list of rules when I could get the robust kind that comes from trusting Christ—*God's* righteousness.

<sup>10-11</sup> I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally, experience his resurrection power, be a partner in his suffering, and go all the way with him to death itself. If there was any way to get in on the resurrection from the dead, I wanted to do it.

<sup>12-14</sup> I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

<sup>15-16</sup> So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision—you'll see it yet! Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it.

<sup>17-19</sup> Stick with me, friends. Keep track of those you see running this same course, headed for this same goal. There are many out there taking other paths, choosing other goals, and trying to get you to go along with them. I've warned you of them many times; sadly, I'm having to do it again. All they want is easy street. They hate Christ's Cross. But easy street is a dead-end street. Those who live there make their bellies their gods; belches are their praise; all they can think of is their appetites.

<sup>20-21</sup> But there's far more to life for us. We're citizens of high heaven! We're waiting the arrival of the Savior, the Master, Jesus Christ, who will transform our earthy bodies into glorious bodies like his own. He'll make us beautiful and whole with the same powerful skill by which he is putting everything as it should be, under and around him.