March 20

Dear DGCC Family,

Grace and peace to you this day. We will continue this week with our walk through the Biblical books in order and will pick up with the Book of Philippians, which is the apostle Paul’s letter to the church at a city called Philippi. So, before we start our study for today, let me ask you a question:

When is the last time you wrote a letter? Not a text, not an email, and not a type-written letter you sent out at Christmastime. By letter I mean a handwritten correspondence to someone close to you. Something that took time and thought. Yeah, me either. So, now let me ask you a different question:

When's the last time you received a letter? Again, the same rules apply. Not a text, not an email, not a typewritten piece of paper, but a handwritten, personal piece of correspondence.

My guess is that for most of us, the answer to both questions is, “a very long time.”

Here’s the Good News: Of the 27 books of the New Testament, 21 of them take the form of letters (sometimes called epistles). All handwritten, and with the exception of Hebrews, whose author is unknown, written by someone who had personally experienced Jesus. Because all of Scripture is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit, one can view these letters as letters from God recorded by people like Paul, John, Peter, and so on, written not only at a specific time in a specific place for a specific audience, but because God is eternal and not bound by space or time, letters that were also composed by the mind of God for you and me, here and now.

This is how the letter to the Philippians stars as written by Paul:

“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all 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. I thank my God every time I remember you” (1:1-3).

What if we took these few sentences and repurposed them as if God is using His personal voice to speak to us? What if we viewed this as a personal letter directly from God? I’m not advocating altering Scripture, but taking a somewhat different look. Given that, the beginning of this letter might read like this:
“I have instructed my servants Paul and Timothy, servants also of my beloved Son, to write this letter on My behalf to My holy people at Downers Grove Community Church, along with their elders and deacons. My Son and I send you this message of our personal grace and peace through the presence of the Holy Spirit. We are thankful for your faith, and for your faithful service.”

Once you have read this, if you were to write a letter back, what would you say? Well, maybe today is that day. Grab a piece of stationery, a pen, and find a quiet spot. Go ahead and write a letter back to your Creator. Then, wait for His response. It will arrive not in your mailbox, not in your inbox, and not on your phone. God’s letters are sent instead directly to your heart.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
March 21

Greetings, DGCC Family.

Today we will continue with the book of Philippians, and view it, as we did yesterday, through the lens of God speaking to us directly and personally through His own voice. The letter continues like this:

“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, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (1:4-6).

As we did yesterday, what if we imagined these sentences as if God was using His personal voice to speak to us? It might look something like this:

“People of Downers Grove Community Church, it is such a joy for Me that so many people pray for you, and that you pray for each other. You are such dedicated servants to me and such faithful partners with my beloved Son in spreading the Gospel News through your example and service. Please be confident that the good work I started in you when I gave my Son on the cross for you, and the work that continues in you through the Holy Spirit who lives in your heart, I will personally see to completion on that glorious day when my beloved Son Jesus returns.”

Such is the Creator God of the universe. The One who takes His personal time to write us a personal letter and to create in us just not a good work, but His good work. Once again, I say, Amen.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
March 22

Greetings, DGCC Family.

Continuing with Paul’s letter to the Philippians, he starts the second chapter with this:

“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (2:1-4).

Again, without meaning to alter Scripture, what if we re-imagined these sentences as if God wrote them directly to us using His personal voice. It might look something like this:

“People of Downers Grove Community Church, I have given you the gift of my Son as a gift of eternal encouragement. He is my perfect gift to you intended to bring comfort in Divine love, Divine sharing of the Holy Spirit, and the joy and compassion that only comes through a personal relationship with Him. It brings me such joy that you have embraced this gift both individually as well as a church; His church, my Son’s bride. My desire is that you continue to abide in His love and to continue the selfless work of caring for those I place in your path, including each other, and that you do so in humility."

This is God’s personal message to you today, her, and now. My prayer for you today is this: that you keep this letter in a special place, to be treasured always. I hope that place is not a box under your bed or a filing cabinet in the basement. Rather, take this letter, and ever so carefully, place it in the longing of your heart, and in the desire of your soul.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
March 23

Greetings, DGCC Family.

As we finish our brief look at the book of Philippians, which is Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, Paul starts the conclusion of his letter like this:

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (4:4-7).

Again, without seeking to change Scripture, if we re-imagined these sentences as if God wrote them directly to us using His personal voice, perhaps they would look something like this:

"Dear people of Downers Grove Community Church: Rejoice in me at all times as I rejoice in you! I love you so much that I will say it again: Be full of joy in Me! Let your gentleness and kindness be a reflection of Me out into a harsh and unkind world. I know you can be anxious and worried. Not only that, but I also fully understand your anxiety and worry. Be assured that you can turn it all over to me. No prayer, no request, and no word of thanks is too small, or too large, for me to deal with. I hear all of them. Please know that true peace comes only in knowing my beloved Son. It is a peace so great that it transcends your understanding, because He is the true guardian of your hearts and minds."

The same God who spoke Creation into existence from nothing has written you 21 letters. Personally. With you in mind. As you read them, know that He wrote them to you as love letters. Love letters from Hs heart…to yours.

IHS,
Pastor Lou
March 24

Happy Friday, everyone.

This past week Judy and I watched the movie “I Can Only Imagine.” It is about Bart Millard, who wrote the now-famous worship song by the same name. So, here’s your musical devotional for the week. Turn up the volume and enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yqdZMtySm2A

IHS,

Pastor Lou