April 24
Grace and peace to you this day.

Let me ask you a question: “Are you a ‘people pleaser’?”

You know what I’m talking about.

I think to some extent, we all are “people pleasers.” We worry about what others will think. We worry what others will say. We seek the approval of those around us. We think that we can earn their favor by, in turn, what we say or what we do.

It’s part of the human experience to want to please other people (ask any politician!). There’s nothing inherently wrong with that unless it becomes the central focus, and the primary purpose, of our lives. Then it becomes a fool’s errand. More importantly, being constantly concerned with the approval of others eclipses our central purpose in life: obedience to our Creator.

The apostle Paul, in addition to being history’s greatest evangelist and theologian, was also an astute observer of human nature. This is evident in much of his writing, including in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica (which was one of his first letters, written in about 51 AD). Ever the pastor and teacher, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians to correct certain misunderstandings and to encourage them to stay the course. In terms of seeking to please those around them, Paul says this:

“We are not trying to please people but God, who tests our hearts” (2:4).

That seems pretty direct. Paul says that he, and by extension, we, should not even try to please people, especially if that effort is first in our lives and comes at the expense of pleasing God. Moreover, Paul says that God “tests our hearts,” meaning that He knows where our true intentions lie.

The medieval monk John Lydgate famously said, “You can please some of the people all of the time, you can please all of the people some of the time, but you can’t please all of the people all of the time”. Fair enough. But my prayer for you today is this: I hope that you turn your attention from pleasing people to pleasing your Creator. In doing so, you might just find that unlike with the approval of those around you, His approval is more than enough.

IHS,

Pastor Lou
April 25

Greetings, children of the Almighty.

One of my favorite literary characters is …Eeyore. For the uninitiated, Eeyore is the donkey in the Winnie-the-Pooh stories. Set against Pooh’s cheery optimism and Tigger’s boundless energy, Eeyore is a down-in-the-dumps character who manages, in a backhanded kind of way, to find the negative in everything. He looks like this:

One of the reasons why I so appreciate Eeyore is for his quotes, his most repeated of which is: “Thanks for noticin’ me.” Again, he’s one of those characters who can take a silver lining and turn it inside out. Here are some of his more memorable sayings:

“Sure is a cheerful color. Guess I'll have to get used to it.”

“If it is a good morning, which I doubt.”

“I was so upset, I forgot to be happy.”

And my all-time favorite:

“It's just a silly old tail, but I'm kind of attached to it.”

Let’s face it, all of us know an Eeyore. And perhaps more to the point, all of us have the capacity to be an Eeyore. The apostle Paul, once again writing out of his observations of human nature, counters this tendency in his first letter to the church at Thessalonica. This is what he says:

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (5:16-18).

In this one simple but profound sentence, Paul tells us to recast our human tendency to look at the negative side of things and instead to “rejoice…pray…and give thanks” during every waking moment of the day. And, knowing that this is not possible all on our own, He tells us that this is the Father’s will for us “in Christ Jesus,” meaning that we can rely on His strength, and not our own.

So go ahead and try it. Se aside your “inner Eeyore” and make it a point to stop, rejoice, pray, and be thankful, whatever your circumstances. You might actually find yourself remembering to be happy.

IHS, Pastor Lou
April 26

Greetings, DGCC Family,

My father was a nuts and bolts, “old school” kind of guy with a big laugh, a bigger heart, a rock-solid work ethic, and a great love for, and dedication to, his family. He made sure that we three boys attended Mass every Sunday wearing a shirt and tie, and starting at an early age also made sure that we understood the value of good and honest work. Not that we didn’t complain about it, but I’ll save that for another day.

My Dad had many favorite sayings and phrases, some of which he would say in Polish, (which made them sound so much colorful), and which was his father’s native tongue. Many of his sayings were, shall we say, a bit salty, especially when dealing with the three teenage sons under his roof. For the sake of decorum, we’ll leave those off these pages.

One of my Dad’s favorite phrases was this: “Stick-to-it-iveness.” He understood that the ability to stay with a task or endeavor, especially in the face of difficulties or bumps in the road, was an important quality. One that would serve his sons well in life. He was right.

I think of this when I read the apostle Paul’s second letter to the church at Thessalonica, written a few months after his first. The early church faced many difficulties: false teachings, division, bickering, persecution, and so on, and the Thessalonian church was no different. In the face of this, Paul encouraged them to maintain their “stick-to-it-iveness.” This is what he said:

“Therefore, among God’s churches we boast about your perseverance and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are enduring” (1:4).

Perhaps you are facing trials of your own that test your faith, dredge up doubt, and weaken your spirit. For today, allow me to encourage you. Persevere. Cling to faith. I promise. God will smile on your “stick-to-it-iveness.”

IHS,

Pastor Lou
April 27

Grace and peace to you this day.

As I finish my time of “sitting around” and recovering from foot surgery, I look back on what it was like to spend my days in a recliner with my “foot up” and a stack of books. In a nutshell, it was ok until about 5 in the afternoon. Then I started getting a little stir crazy.

I think it is in our nature to do things. To work. To be productive. To contribute. Make no mistake. I’m not talking here about those with physical or cognitive limitations that prevent this. Nor am I talking about rest and relaxation, which are much needed and quite valuable. What I am talking about is using the resources and abilities God has given us for our own provision and in particular to advance His Kingdom here on earth.

Once again, in his second letter to the Thessalonians, Paul says it like this:

“For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.” We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good” (3:10-13).

At first blush, this seems harsh, but I think Paul was on to something that was true then and is true now. The church did not and does not rely on the government for money or assistance. It does not run businesses to generate revenue and a profit. The truth in Paul’s time, and in our time, is this: God’s provision for the church, for the most part, comes through all of you.

My wife Judy has a saying: “You never retire from the Lord’s service.” I think that is quite true. And so, my prayer for you today is this: May you find joy in working and serving the Lord. May you be mindful of the needs of the church. And, as Paul said, may you “never tire of doing what is good.”

IHS,

Pastor Lou
April 28

Happy Friday, everyone!
Here’s your musical devotion for the week. Turn up the volume and enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4XWfwLHeLM

IHS,
Pastor Lou