

SERMON - THE 20<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY - 5 OCTOBER 2008  
St. John's Anglican Church, Greensboro, North Carolina

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*Ephes. 5:18-20 (KJV)*

*But be filled with the Spirit; [19] Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; [20] Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

Some weeks ago we talked about being thankful to God in all circumstances, at that time using the passage from Paul's letter *1 Thes. 5:17-18 (KJV) Pray without ceasing. [18] In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

Today we hear Paul's words to us saying that we ought to be filled with the Holy Spirit at all times and in all circumstances producing in ourselves such joy that our lives will be a joyous song to God, a prayer of thanks no matter what comes our way.

Today, our economy is in the tank, costs just to put food on the table are rising beyond some of our abilities to pay, costs to just heat our homes this coming winter are expected to be beyond the reach of many persons, and along with that the number of us here in this country are facing the loss of our jobs and the subsequent loss of our homes.

And we are supposed to be thankful?

Doesn't there seem to be a credibility gap here?

Where in the world can there be joy?

The key words that I just said are "where in the world." There is nowhere in the "world" where there can be joy in these circumstances. Let me repeat that, "There is nowhere in the "world" where there can be joy in these circumstances."

Even when there is prosperity, even where there is plenty, even if the good times are beyond our wildest imaginations, the world cannot give us joy, cannot give us true happiness.

Only God can.

Only God can give the true happiness, the true joy that causes our hearts to sing.

Not the world.

Circumstances beyond our control can take away everything we possess, take away all that we hold dear, our jobs, our homes, our food if we are approaching life from the perspective of worldly “things.”

Those things are going to go away some day anyway. You sure can't take them with you when you die and die you will, some day, sooner or later.

Paul had this to say on the subject in *1 Tim. 6:6-8 (KJV) But godliness with contentment is great gain. <sup>7</sup>For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. <sup>8</sup>And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.*

We don't like to think about dying. We don't want to think about having to leave all the things that we have. But we will.

So then, what is really important?

The things that we have, the “stuff” that we have accumulated..... or God?

Let's put everything in perspective. “Stuff” is transitional, temporal, here today and gone tomorrow.

God is eternal. God does not change. God is infinite. If God through Jesus Christ has the Holy Spirit in your heart and in your soul and in your mind why shouldn't you be joyous?

Why shouldn't you be joyous in all things and in all circumstances because you have overcome the world with its things, with its stuff, with its death, with its eternal death.

You have overcome the world with its anxieties and its concerns with the material rather than the spiritual.

You have overcome the world because you have God in your hearts.

Jesus tells us that we shouldn't worry about what we will eat or what we will wear because God will provide for us. God has taken on that worry for us if we will just seek Him and His Kingdom.

We have to have faith, faith in Jesus Christ as our savior and we have to have faith that God will provide for our needs.

This not to say that life on this side of the curtain will ever be easy. It actually may be harder because of your belief.

But which is the most important, God or Mammon?

It's your decision.

Amen.