Floyd J. Tidd:

Over the last number of months, all of us across Canada and Bermuda and, in fact, around the world have found our routines radically changed and the journey we might have been expecting to be taking this summer has been so very different than we might have ever imagined. Limited travel, quarantine, self isolation requirements, as well as an intentional choice to minimize social distances with others have left many of us feeling alone and disconnected from others. Yet, even in these days, the Bible calls us to be a people of joy, a people who experienced joy in the journey regardless of what is happening on that journey. Paul wrote a letter or to the Philippians from prison, his own journey taking him places he never would have expected. Yet from there he wrote and he encouraged fellow followers of Jesus to rejoice, to know, and to express joy.

Floyd J. Tidd:

Last week, Commissioner Tracy shared one of the keys to Paul's ability to have joy in the journey despite the circumstances. Paul lived with a perspective that saw the events of life through a lens that shows God's purpose to be bigger than Paul's problems. This morning, continuing to look at the verses of Philippians One, we see two other keys to Paul's ability to live with joy. I'm going to invite you to follow along with me this morning. We're going to commence at verse 19, but watch the words that lead into verse 19 at the end of verse 18. "Yes," Paul says, "I will continue to rejoice for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance." Paul says, "Not only do I have this perspective that I live from," that Commissioner Tracy spoke of last week, he also says, "I have a power or to live on."

Floyd J. Tidd:

Days like these, although they may seem to have less labor intensive days filled, can still be exhausting. It can be draining for us. But Paul says, "Whatever might be draining you in the journey, there is a power to live on." He says, "It's a two prong plug." It's, first of all, knowing the prayers of others supporting him, Paul said, gives him a power to live on. Paul knew the power of prayer, and he knew the prayers of the people at Philippi were giving him a power to live on. Can I encourage you to pray, to ask others to pray for you, to let them know how they can pray for you? And, in fact, as well, offer to pray for others and ask how you can pray for them, knowing that there is great power in prayer. But he goes on to say, "Not only is it the power of the prayers of others," he says, "I know as well the help that's given to me by the spirit of Jesus Christ."

Floyd J. Tidd:

It was a power to live on from the prayers of people supporting him and the help that was given to him by the spirit of God. We often sing the song, His Provision, and the verse says to us, "When the darkness falls around me, when I'm bewildered and afraid, when I feel the most deserted and betrayed, then my every need is answered by God's providential care and his Holy Spirit. Here's my prayer." His Holy Spirit, can I say to you again, reminding you of that which you already know, but hear what Paul was saying to us and be reminded that you are not alone in this journey, that he walks with you by the presence of his Holy Spirit. Paul had a perspective that he lived from, he had a power that he lived on, and as we read on in verse 20 and 21, we see that Paul had a purpose for his life. He lived for purpose.

Floyd J. Tidd:

He says, "I eagerly expect and I hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but I will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." Paul was not suicidal, but he knew that on the other side of death there was the great inheritance of life eternal in being in the presence of his Lord and savior. There was a gain even in death. But he says, "While I live, my life is lived with purpose." He says, "For me to live is Christ." Can I invite you to consider how you would fill in that blank? How would you answer the question, "for me to live is, what"? In these days of COVID and having much time to be alone, much time to reflect and to think, let us examine the purpose of our lives. Let us ensure that the purpose of our lives is a purpose worth living for, and the only purpose worth living for is a purpose worth dying for.

Floyd J. Tidd:

Paul knew that and he claimed his purpose in living to be to live for Christ. I'm challenged when I think about that statement, I'm challenged to think what those around me, those who are neighbors to me, those who are family members, those who are friends and colleagues, what they would say would be the purpose of my life if asked. May the purpose of my life in Christ be lived in such a manner and with such joy that it becomes a witness to the reality of our risen Lord and savior. I don't know where you are today in your own life's journey, and I don't know where you are even in the journey of COVID-19. But what I do know is that God intends for you to live this journey with his joy. It's our prayer for you today that you will know the deep richness of his love, his peace, and experience his joy. May God bless you and may the joy of his life lived in you shine to others. In Jesus' name, we pray this for you. Amen.