

Forgiveness, Joy, and Peace

Scripture Reading — Philippians 4:4-9

The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 4:7 —

In my youth, when elephant jokes were the rage, a friend challenged me not to think of pink elephants for the next five minutes. “I bet ya can’t keep ’em out of your mind,” he said.

But Christ’s followers, says Paul, can and should direct their thoughts, in the power of Christ, to things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. Martin Luther said about temptations, “You cannot keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair.” The peace of God should guard our hearts and minds.

There have been times when I was oppressed by desolate thoughts going around in vicious circles. And I have seen people walking the streets snarling to themselves, tortured by some nameless horror.

Forgiveness from God is the beginning of breaking the vicious circle. In turn, when we follow Christ’s command to forgive those who have wronged us, we are freed from the chains of lifelong grudges and bitter thoughts. And it helps to know that the love of the Creator of the universe surrounds us. That knowledge changes the world we inhabit, lifts us out of the slimy pit, and puts a new song in our mouth (Psalm 40:2-3). A life of joy and peace dawns after we leave the dark night of sin that enslaved us.

Prayer

God our Father, pour the healing peace of the Holy Spirit on our troubled souls, and may we be a blessing for others who seek peace and refuge with you. Amen.

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