

## Lenten Devotional February 16, 2018

### Scripture

#### Philippians 4:1-9

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. <sup>2</sup>I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. <sup>3</sup>Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. <sup>4</sup>Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

### Devotional

#### The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Sterling '88/'98, Pastor, St. Paul's United Methodist Church, Allison Park, Pa. / Field Education Supervisor

Wouldn't it be something if Christian believers purposed to live a life of "passionate gratitude"? The expression "with thanksgiving" (v. 6) is meant to be more than an add-on in this text, I believe, and it follows the phrase "in everything." I'll bet you have had lots of blessings in your life for which it was *easy* to be thankful. But what about the things that, at least initially, were not perceived as "blessings" at all? Verse 6 says "in everything," doesn't it?

The author of Philippians suggests that approaching God with a thankful attitude makes a difference. Maybe God grooves on hearing us being grateful, even as we come with our "laundry lists" of prayer requests. What if gratitude had nothing to do with whether we had a *reason* to be grateful? I am thankful for my partner of 40-plus years, always, regardless of whether she gives me reason in the moment. And my "passion" for her means that I regularly tell her just how thankful I am. I think she really likes it. Maybe God does, too?

Developing a perpetually thankful heart is a win-win-win situation: God likes it, it makes us feel really good, and others are blessed by it and respond favorably to it. Only being thankful when something positive happens is lame. Passionate gratitude "in everything" makes a powerful witness, dear ones!

### Prayer

Dear God, I thank you. I just thank you! Help me develop a truly thankful heart and a passion for gratitude, not just toward you, but around others as well. Teach me the joy and power of giving thanks in everything. In Jesus' name, amen.