

PHIL 4.8: LET'S BE POSITIVE!

(Central Baptist Church, Chelmsford Church Meeting 8 July 2007)

Phil 4.8: **“Fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, lovely and honourable”** (GNB)

Peterson: **“Fill your minds and meditate on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious – the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not to curse”**

Or in the more prosaic words of the NRSV: **“Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, 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”**

I.e. let's be positive about the good things of life.

Let's celebrate all that is **true, noble, right, lovely and honourable.**

1. LET'S BE POSITIVE ABOUT GOD'S WORLD

Caroline and I take a daily paper – and its not just because we like to do the crossword. We are news junkies, and we are fascinated by all that is going on in the world. Yet sadly our newspaper like all the other newspapers is one-sided. For it focuses on all that is untrue, ignoble, wrong, ugly and blameworthy. I find it often a depressing experience to read the paper.

But, thank God, there is more to life than what we read in the papers. The world is not filled with rotters – there are many good people around too. Yes, we may live in a fallen world – but it is still God's world. And what God created is good. So let's be positive about the world that God has made.

Caroline and I have just returned from a three week trip around Greece. We visited the islands of Crete, Paros, Delos, Mykonos, and Santorini. The landscapes and the seascapes of these Greek islands were fabulous. We marvelled at the beauty of the God's world. But we also marvelled at the amazing achievements of the people of these Greek islands. The craftsmanship, for instance, of the Minoans who lived 2000 years BC is staggering - alas, the museum at Heraklion which displays the treasures of Knossos was shut, but we were able to wander through other museums and see for instance two wonderful paintings by El Greco.

Yes, there is so much in this world which is **excellent and worthy of praise.** There is so much which is worth seeing, hearing, and pondering upon. There is so much about which we can be positive. This is God's world – and what a wonderful world he has made.

2. LET'S BE POSITIVE ABOUT GOD'S CHURCH

Alas, the church has not always had the best of presses.

If you read the papers, you sometimes get the impression that most ministers are either perverts, wimps or weirdos. Some undoubtedly are.

But that is a one-sided view of the church. The fact is that most ministers as also most of their people are good people, honourable people, excellent people.

So let's be positive about the church. For it is God's church, and God is achieving great things through his people.

Alas, we Brits sometimes find it difficult to be positive.

There is a streak in our national character which tends to make us be very critical about ourselves, and indeed about others.

The Americans, by contrast, find it so much easier to be positive.

I remember once being an exchange pastor in Kentucky. After every service people would come to the door to tell me what a mighty fine preacher I was. I got so embarrassed that one Sunday I didn't go to the door, but stood by the pulpit. So they lined up by the pulpit to tell me what a mighty fine preacher I was.

I believe that we need to be similarly positive – not about my preaching, but about one another. The fact is that there is much in our church which is **good** and that **deserves praise**.

I am, for instance, constantly amazed by all the work which is done week out, week in, by the vast army of volunteers.

- Just think of all that has been done today in Jesus' name – the stewards, the musicians, the technicians, the flower arrangers, the duty deacons, those serving coffee and tea, those praying for people under the cross, the Light Factory leaders and helpers – friends, we are incredibly blessed.
- Just think too of all that was done last week in Jesus' name, and of all that will be done this week.

There are so many things in our church **that are good and that deserve praise**.

Instead of focussing on those times when things go wrong, think of those many more times when things go right. Thank God – and thank the people concerned.

Yes, let's be positive about God's church – let's be positive about this church.

What a privilege it is to be a member of the family of God.