

## “Having the Same Love”

### Philippians 2: 1-18

We continue in the letter of Philippians this week. As we may remember, Paul, in the first part of this letter told the group to live lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Moving forward, in this part of the letter, Paul goes a little more in depth about what this means for us as people of faith. He does this by sharing a piece of an ancient hymn that was very familiar to the Philippians.

Many scholars believe that this hymn found in verses 5-11 was around long before Paul ever began his journey evangelizing. In fact, some scholars have shared that it may have been the Philippians who first taught Paul this amazing hymn that truly captures what we as people of faith believe about our Lord and Savior.

I have to tell you that sometimes when people ask me what we as Disciples of Christ believe about Jesus Christ, I just want to point to this text and say, “Here, Read this!”

I invite us to take another look at this hymn because it really is a rich text for us as people of faith, especially in light of the recent events in Paris, in Baghdad, in Beirut, in Kenya, in light of our world which is so desperately crying out, “Lord, Have Mercy on Us”.

Hear these words again: “Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn’t think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became *human*! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn’t claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.

<sup>9-11</sup> Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything, ever, so that all created beings in heaven and on earth—even those long ago dead and buried—will bow in worship before this Jesus Christ, and call out in praise that he is the Master of all, to the glorious honor of God the Father.”

It really is so simple, isn’t it? We complicate it so much. “Jesus didn’t think so much of himself to cling to advantages of status. When the time came, he set those aside and became human. He lived a selfless, obedient life.” It really is so simple. This right here is the foundation of our faith as Christians.

You see these words aren’t vague. These words are not churchy words. These words are words of faith. These words mean something to us. These words

mean something for us. They have implications for how we relate to one other. They have implications for how we interact with one another. These words, that tells us about Christ, have implications for how we should treat all other. We should treat all people as made in the image of God.

He did not cling to privilege or status but lived a selfless, obedient life.

Two things to note about this hymn. First, when Paul uses the word obedient, he is not meaning living in accordance with a set of rules and regulations. Rather Paul means that we as followers of Christ are called to respond in the appropriate way to the self-giving love of God, which brings us to the second thing.

If we proclaim Jesus as our Lord, as people of faith, we should not be looking for status and power. Rather we should be humbly considering others in a way better than the way we consider ourselves. We should be concerned with the interests of other, just like Jesus Christ did during his ministry here on earth.

If we really are in Christ, if we really proclaim Jesus as our Lord and Savior, then we must share the same selfless, obedient attitude, the same attitude of servanthood that was his during his ministry here on earth and that now is a part of our call as his follower. Or let me say it another way: If we are really going to live out what we say we believe about Christ, then this piece about having the same

attitude of servanthood as Christ, has got to be the basis for the practicing of our faith.

Let me explain: I know everyone has heard about the latest first world problem that seems to be occupying everyone's time. I'm talking about the firestorm that is surrounding Starbuck's red cups. My Facebook feed was filled for days with articles, pictures, jokes about the controversy surrounding these red cups. Even our own denomination got into the act, because we are the Red Chalice people. There were pleas this week from our General office for everyone to change their profile pictures to the Disciples Red Chalice so that people would know that there is truly a "red cup" that represents Christ.

Now I have to tell you that my first thought when I read this was "Really? A picture of our Red Chalice is going to show the world that we are a people called to bring healing and wholeness to God's creation. How is it supposed to do that when probably 50% or more of the people don't know about the Disciples of Christ denomination?"

I get that it is a creative marketing ploy, a way to get the Disciples name out there but I wondered if instead of that, what if we showed the world how we live out what the cup really represents for us. How about we tell the world, show the world how we live lives as a community based on welcome and grace, how we

strive to reach across the political divide, to reach across racial and ethical lines, how we strive to bring reconciliation to our world by creating spaces for love and peace to reign. Or better yet, how about we just point to this text and say, “Here, this is what we believe.”

Okay, now I know I’ve gone from preaching to meddling. So, since I’m meddling, I might as well go a little bit farther. You see, we assume that Paul is talking to us as individuals, that when he says, “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus”, he is really telling us what we should do and be as individual followers of Jesus, which is a natural assumption given that we live in a society that thrives on individualism. Let’s be honest, we don’t really experience any kind of community connection any more. It seems that the only times we really come together as a community is at sporting events or when tragedy strikes like what we’ve seen this past week, surrounding the deaths of Officer Ellis and EMT Mackey. People coming together, supporting one another, using their togetherness to offer hope and comfort.

In times like this, it saddens me that community relationships just aren’t a part of our world anymore. People live separate lives. They go to work. They come home, sometimes never interacting with another human being once. There is just not a community connection anymore, so much so that even the Pope is making a plea for people to put down the technology and have a conversation face to face

with someone, to make a connection with others, to see each other not just as random people but people who God created for us to be in relationship with, to be in partnership with, people who can and will support one another along our journeys.

We live in an individualistic world which is so different from what Paul experienced in his own time. Paul was not thinking about individuals when he wrote this letter. He was thinking about and talking to the community at Philippi as a whole. Paul lived in a world where individuals were considered vulnerable without membership and protection from a group.

So when Paul uses the word “you” in this text, he is speaking in the plural sense. You as a community, are called to have the same love, to have the same mind. You as a community are called to have the same mind that was found in Christ.

Now that changes everything doesn't it?

It is not about me. It is not about you. It never was. Our faith was never about rules and regulations. Our faith was never about just me and Jesus. Our faith has always been about us, as a community, working together, worshipping together, serving together, a community reflecting the light and love of Christ together.

Our faith has always been about the Body of Christ here on earth, not as uniform entity, but as a community diverse in Spirit, diverse in gifts acting as one, engaging each other, having the same servant attitude that was found in Christ Jesus during his ministry on earth, a community offering healing and wholeness to a world that so desperately needs it.

If people can't see this when they interact with us, If people don't experience this when they break bread with us, then we as a community have a problem. We are not living lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. We are not of the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. We are not having the same love. We are not reflecting the same light and love of God in all that we do and say as followers of Jesus Christ. We are not putting our words of faith into action.

Maybe that's why so many people are turning away from churches nowadays. As people of faith, we are not shining as stars in the world, guiding others to the light and love of Christ.

Instead, as a whole, we are more concerned about privileges and statuses. Instead we are more concerned about getting ahead. Instead we are more worried about red cups.

Maybe it's time we take Paul's advice and remember that God is at work in us, enabling us to become ways that reflect the self-giving love of Christ. Maybe it

is time we remember that God is calling us to provide people with a glimpse of the Kingdom of God so that lives will be transformed, hearts will be opened and all of God's creation will be restored and made whole.

Someone asked me yesterday if I had planned to change my sermon in light of the events in Paris and other events around the world and my immediate answer was no! Now, is even more of a call to come together as a community having the same mind that was found in Christ, having the same love that was found in Christ. Now when our world is in pain, now when people are asking why, now when people are pointing fingers, blaming the refugees, blaming the politicians, blaming the militants who cannot and will not see people who are different as created in the image of God.

Now is the time that we as people of faith come together as one and show the world that there is another way, a way not based on privilege or status, a way not based on hate and destruction, a way not based on hopelessness. We are called to show the world a way of compassion, a way of peace, a way where all are called to be of the same mind, the same love that was found in Jesus. We are called to show the world the way of grace and mercy just like it was shown to us the first time we claimed Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

So maybe, in light of the events that happened this past week in Paris, in Beirut, in Kenya, in Baghdad, maybe it is time we remember we are called to be followers of Jesus Christ, the one who gave up privilege and status, the one who became human, the one who lived a selfless obedient life, even to the point of death so that all would have new life, so that all would know death does not have the final word.

Maybe it is time we remember that we are called to have the same love that was found in Jesus Christ and share it with all of God's creation. Amen.