

Ps 78: Ex 17:1-7; Phil 2:1-13; Mt 21:23-32
Our Exalted Lord Jesus – 10-01-17

Paul is in prison again. We are not sure exactly where he is locked up – Caesarea – Rome, perhaps even Ephesus. But, he shares his joy with the folks at Philippi. He is rejoicing because the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being preached everywhere the apostles have been. Paul said last week in this letter that he counts it a privilege to believe in Jesus and to suffer for Him.

In our portion of Scripture for today, Paul expresses his deep desire for the brothers and sisters in Philippi –

Encouragement in Christ (v 1)

The consolation of love

Our fellowship in the Holy Spirit – also affection and compassion in the Spirit.

If all these gifts are poured out upon the church – says Paul – then this is a call for radical unity in the body of Christ.

Paul's joy is (or will be) complete when these
brothers and sisters are

Of the same mind

Maintaining the same love

United in spirit

Intent on one purpose (v 2)

What is the purpose of the church? I sense some
confusion in this. Fellowship is sweet. Breaking
bread – beyond the bread and wine of Holy
Communion, is satisfying. But, the purpose of
the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for
the transformation of the world.

Without the working of the Gospel and the
power of the Holy Spirit, none of these wonders
is possible among the fallen race of humans.
Human attainment and human glory do not rise
very far from the ground. It is Jesus Christ,
descended from His exalted throne in heavenly
places, who has brought us these gifts
(encouragement, consolation, true affection and
compassion in the Spirit). This cannot be over-
stated. You and I can only hope to imitate Jesus
– and proclaim His glory to our fellow beings.

Out of the proclamation comes faith – out of faith comes repentance and our cleansing by Christ’s blood of sacrifice. Out of our cleansing, the glory of God is revealed. You and I bring only our willingness and our faith. The rest is God.

Verse 3: Now the rubber hits the road. *Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit.*

There was a dirt farmer in Oklahoma. His family managed to grow squash, beans, corn, melons and some tobacco for cash. They worked hard. They could eat, but had little more. One day, a man in a pin-striped suit came to the door and offered to buy their acreage. They quoted a high price. The man eagerly paid the price and immediately drilled three oil wells. He extracted millions of dollars’ worth of crude per year out of the ground. Do you recognize a good thing when you have it? Last week I asked what value you put upon the presence of God – the Providence of God in your life – and in the life of the church. Are we producing all we are able to out of God’s gifts to us? Is Jesus Christ exalted in our midst?

The Apostle Paul hasn't been able to visit Philippi for a long time. He is getting news of the situation in the church. He is concerned about selfishness and empty conceit.

Now, conceit is “excessive appreciation of one's own worth or virtue” (merriamwebster.com). Selfishness is thinking of our needs, our wants, our own advantage – ahead of anybody else.

Still in verse 3: We come to a pivot after the comma: *but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves...*

The Apostle Paul is reminding the Philippians – and us – to put these worldly habits aside. We need to get over ourselves and, what does he say? (verse 4) *do not merely look out for you own personal interests, but also for the interest of others.*

How are we to shed the old man, the old woman, the old boy or girl?

Verse 5: *Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus*

We cannot impersonate Jesus – posing as the Savior of the world. But, we can imitate our Lord. We can emulate His great passion for humanity – His trust in and obedience to our Heavenly Father – His reliance upon the Holy Spirit.

Here it is in verse 6: *who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.* When Jesus departed His place in heaven, dwelling with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He did not keep His blindingly glorious appearance. He did not show forth his utter holiness and transcendence as he walked the streets of Nazareth.

Verse 7: *but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.* Jesus left his throne behind. He sincerely took up the cause of mortals.

Verse 8: *Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Jesus gave Himself completely –to the cause for which the Father sent Him. He emptied Himself

of every divine entitlement. He had one mortal life – and He laid it down. From the cross He said, “It is finished.” The sacrifice was made. And it was a perfect sacrifice. All accounts are paid for eternity.

The Father had no intention of leaving His Only Son there in that lowly place. Verse 9: *For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,*

From the lowest position – as a sacrificial Lamb – to the highest position God has ordained forever Verse 10: *so, at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

Verse 11: and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus moves from the lowest place to the highest place of exaltation. Paul speaks to the congregation at Philippi – Verse 12: *So, then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as*

in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;

Paul, held in a Roman jail, cannot be present to encourage and lead God's people. He entrusts them – entrusts us – into God's care. He says Verse 13: *for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.* Fear and trembling are evidence of our awe and devotion to the Lord.

A preacher cannot preach what is not revealed in the Scriptures. Jesus' exaltation occurred on the day He was resurrected to new life. Forty days later, He ascended bodily to heavenly glory. Now, Jesus reigns as the Supreme Ruler of the entire cosmos. Your life as His disciple, sheds abroad this glorious truth. Amen.