

9-27-20

Sermon- Watching Out For Others

Scripture- Philippians 2:1-13, CTW- PS 78:1-8

Hymns- 152, 147, 124

Theme- In order to avoid discord among believers, Paul stressed spiritual unity, asking Philippians to love one another and to be one in spirit and purpose. When we work together, caring for the problems of others as if they were our problems, we demonstrate Christ's example of putting others first and we experience unity.

To truly love others - also, oneself - is to cultivate humility that we can use to share some burdens of others, shoulder some burdens of our own, shed some burdens we have no business carrying.

I. Paul Says that love bears burdens freely and humbly!

There is a story told of a woman who lost her son in battle and could find no comfort. She went to a wise counselor and asked what to do.

The wise man said: "Go find a home that has absolutely no sorrow, bring back a mustard seed from it, and God will restore your son".

After several weeks, she returned and said, "Sir, I have been so selfish in my grief. I know now that some sorrow is common to every home. Now that I understand that, I find that my grief has now turned to joy."

A. Grief may not turn to joy sooner rather than later, but it makes us wiser for the rest of our journey. Once we realize that grief is indeed common to all people, and that the joy Jesus promised his disciples is resolved by the truth of His resurrection, we come closer to His true desire for all of us! All it takes for grief to turn to joy is **faith as small as a mustard seed!**

Yes, the fact of life is that we all have problems and cares that weigh us down, and what to do with all of that creates yet another problem for us...think about it!

It is one of life's ironies that we become burdened about what to do with our burdens!

A fella once told me that his biggest worry was worrying about worrying!

Therefore, we should not be surprised to discover that the Bible speaks clearly on the subject of burden-bearing - provided we understand what might otherwise be considered a contradiction, as seen in Paul's letter to the Galatians:

The essence of what we find in the Bible about burden-bearing is this: Some burdens are meant to be shared - **Galatians 6:2** . . . Some are meant to be shouldered - **Galatians 6:5** . . . Some are meant to be shed - **Psalms 55:22** which states: "Give your burdens to the Lord and He will take care of you, He will not permit the Godly to slip and fall!"

Folks: If we really want to share burdens with one another and shoulder burdens of our own and shed burdens that we have no business carrying, then we have to make up our minds to do so with an attitude of humility, just like the way that Jesus bore our griefs and carried our sorrows.

B. Wherever an attitude of humility prevails, there will be unity of purpose and plan!

Humble persons have what it takes to deal with burdens because to do so requires integrity. Every humble person I ever knew epitomized integrity: unity, wholeness, oneness at peace with God, at one with Christ, at one with fellow believers and at one with self.

On the other hand, wherever pride prevails - selfish ambition, personal desire for prestige and power, an attitude of superiority toward those whose differences some don't like, you will find disunity, the chief characteristic of which is being "at odds with" rather than "at one with", fellow believers.

In the face of the danger of disunity caused by selfishness, Paul appealed to Christians to stick with humility as exemplified by Christ:

Look at Philippians 2:1-5 ¹Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Apparently, before the Christian movement even got off the ground, disunity reared its ugly head and threatened to derail the success of the early Church.

So Paul appealed to their sense of “community” – **the unity of community!** We need to remember that phrase!

Christians of all denominations and diverse lifestyles have too much in common to allow disunity to get a foothold in the Christian Fellowship and thereby put a stranglehold on the mission of the Church!

“We are one in the bond of love!” “Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love, the fellowship of kindred minds, is like to that above!”

It is as if Paul pled with them by asking this question out of desperation: “Why can’t we all just get along with each other?” “Why Not Just Be Christian?”

II. Focus on the Meaning of the Phrase “In Christ!”

The meaning is about The fact that we all are in Christ . . . part of the Christian Fellowship, in a love relationship with Christ who first loved us and gave himself for us, and told us to love one another.

We are therefore to be armed with power by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. We are to be people of pity and

heartfelt compassion and committed to the purpose for which Christ established His Church.

Considering all that we have in common this is supposed to persuade us to be like Jesus in putting the needs of those we love ahead of our own.

A. Is Paul asking us to put ourselves down, to disown our individual talents or skills to deny our personal accomplishments, or put on a poor self-image or to forego any pleasures in life? Absolutely not! Meekness is not weakness!

Biblical meekness is a healthy, balanced view of ourselves – owning up to strengths as well as recognizing weaknesses – yet accentuating the positive by putting our best efforts into looking out for the needs and interests of others. **Think about it!**

However, we must take into consideration that there is only so much any one person can and should do, so there is all the more reason for depending on God to see us through life's struggles – Philippians 2:13-15 reminds us ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. ¹⁴Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then **you will shine among them** like stars in the sky.

How reassuring it is to know God is with us and working in us and through us!

B. Wouldn't it be nice, though, if everyone would serve the Lord without grumbling, arguing or complaining about it?

Oh well, that could be asking a little too much, inasmuch as it seems some folks cannot help but find fault.

Have you heard the story about one dear woman whose husband grumbled about everything? (anybody here have that problem?)

She couldn't seem to please him no matter what. One day she decided that **on that particular day** she was going to do anything he asked her to do. When he came down for breakfast,

she asked him how he would like his eggs. "I'll have one scrambled and one fried."

She scrambled one egg and fried the other. She put his breakfast on the table in front of him and he just sat there, staring at it with a frown on his face.

"Now, what's the matter," she asked. You told me to fry one and scramble one, and that's exactly what I did." To which he grumbled, **"You fried the wrong one."**

This wife gave her husband a chance to "shine like a star", but he would have no part of it. Some folks are just determined to make life miserable, for themselves and for others. But, you know, it doesn't have to be that way!

C. All it takes is a little bit of cooperation, perhaps as small as a mustard seed? God has done His part - but we must do our part in order for a partnership to work. After all, if God is for us, who can be against us? Cooperate, and you will have no cause for complaint! You see, complaining is not going to happen if we commit our way unto the Lord, trusting Him to be our guardian and guide.

You have probably heard these words of encouragement offered to me many times: "With God on your side, how can you lose?" "He that spared not His own Son for us, how shall He not also, with Him, freely give us all things we need?"

Does this include a victory over our own grumbling? **Think about it!**

The truth is that grumblers also can be happy if they, like Christians are supposed to, maintain purity of thought and of character.

They need to be looking for something to commend rather than find fault with. They need to seek to build up, not tear down, striving to be a fellow believer who unites, not divides.

III. Conclusion: We Christians have something special to offer to those who reside within the circle of our influence: a little ray of sunshine in the midst of darkness: a glimmer of hope . . . a touch of love . . . a reason for living!

A. And you know what? It's not so much seeing you display the spirit of Christ that sparks someone's praise to God, it is your humble sharing a bit of yourself without grumbling about it.

What a powerful influence for good your humble acts of service have on recipients of your love! What a positive impact on the Cause of Christ! What a lasting effect on you personally!

Your joy, like Paul's, is fulfilled when you are thinking the same way, expressing the same love, sharing the same feelings, focusing on the same goal that your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ thought, expressed, shared and focused on!

There is no joy like that of having the mind of Christ - who humbled himself and became obedient to the will of God! Therefore God exalted Him.

B. Think about it: The mind of Christ in you! The holy Spirit will convince you and energize you to empathize with others whereupon you exercise your freedom to minister . . . serve . . . bear one another's burdens, and to do so humbly, in the name of Jesus!

Therefore, brothers and sisters in Christ, let us stick with humility and shine like stars!

Amen? Let Us Pray...