

Pastor Jordan Gades 5.12.18 Philippians 2: 1-13

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ Amen.

If. This is how our reading today starts with the one little word that means so much. With a question. A cutting strike to our life of faith.

If then there is any encouragement in Christ,

If any consolation from love,

If there is any sharing in the Spirit,

If there is any compassion and sympathy,

What is Paul saying to these people in Caesarea Philippi? Haven't they been told just like we have about our God and our Christ.

Do these things exist?

The one who brings encouragement, consolation, sharing in the spirit, compassion, and sympathy is Jesus Christ our savior and Lord. When Paul is saying **if** he is saying this if to an audience that would know that **IF** as an **IF** there is encouragement, **and of course there is**. There is no question in the mind of Paul about these things that are ours in Christ and that sets the tone for this whole passage. No doubt about the reality of Christ. That was what the Philippians knew, that is what we know. That is how we live out every day.

This is the Christ hymn. The piece of poetry that speaks to how our God interacts with all of creation. And what do we hear right now.

We hear that our creator decided to come to this earth as one of us rather than in the full might and glory that a creator bears. We find Jesus Christ not even wanting to have us think that way, that way where we should aim for power, for our own glory, to become god's ourselves. Rather we are given this picture of God and these amazing assurances from God **for one another**.

And how do we respond to this picture of God that is painted so clearly. How do we respond to the fact that our God turned from being God to come to us. How do we respond to these simple plea's that are laid before us. Be Humble, help one another, look to the welfare of others first.

I think we know. WE are only human. But that why Jesus did what he did and continues to do today. To show us this way and to help us do it now. We live with a gracious and loving God guiding us and forgiving us when we screw this all up. And it's never too late to start respond and trying to live as fully as we can in the light of our relationship with our God. This relationship changes things.

This last week I got to enjoy a dinner with our graduating seniors. It was a great time. A lot of memories were told, a whole lot of laughs were shared, and I'm actually really sad that I didn't get more time to get to know this amazing group of young men and women as they head out from high school and move into this next part of their life journey.

Towards the end of the evening though there was one comment that has stuck with me. (and while it had nothing to do with falling off of retaining walls or cliffs it has stayed with me none the less) One of our group mentioned how this might be the last time that they would be together like this. In that group. These young men and women aren't in the same friend groups, probably don't speak to everyone every day. But their God and their faith did and does something different. It brings together of different groups and asks them to look for the best interest of each other rather than themselves. To be humble and work for each other's well-being. That doesn't just stop when we aren't in the same town. When we aren't amazingly close friends. God brings us together for one another. In that coming together, in those relationships with God at the center acting as the glue and power of those relationships we find happiness joy in the midst of pain.

While we were at the synod convention last week, you may have noticed neither Pastor Darrell or I were here, and please thank Karen Newton for stepping in again as I've heard she did an outstanding Job, at the synod assembly, We heard from our **keynote speaker** about how we cannot and should not put our own joy or happiness as foremost, as the thing that we aim for. This lines up

perfectly with our Christ hymn. Christ doesn't put himself first, doesn't aim for his own happiness but rather of those who he loves. And in doing so perfects joy for himself and for us all. It's not a pretty journey, let's not sugar coat it, but joy is found within it. These golden nuggets of such perfection that we get a better glimpse of the kingdom that is promised us in Jesus Christ.

And that's probably the best lesson that we can take away from this Christ hymn. Be Humble but be brave, look for the well-being of others, show compassion as Christ shows compassion. We are the hands and feet and mouths of Christ moving in this world. Let us keep us this work. The Spirit of God is here. The Spirit of God fills us and sustains us. That Spirit is calling us into the world. Now, just as much and maybe any point in history we need the Holy Spirit moving in this world. We need more understanding, we need more dialogue, we need more acts of mercy and humility. We need caring and compassion to overtake hatred and division.

Let us go out and do as Christ has done. Let us go out and do what we were created for, let us go out and show Christ to this world. Amen