

## Sermon Notes Oct 1, 2017

**Sermon Focus** - Philippians 2:1-13

**Theme:** Servanthood

**Lectionary Readings for this Sunday** [http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearA\\_RCL/Pentecost/AProp21\\_RCL.html](http://www.lectionarypage.net/YearA_RCL/Pentecost/AProp21_RCL.html)

This is good stuff today. Paul says, *If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.*

When we encourage, give consolation, share the power with our brothers and sisters, we become 'one mind.' We don't become rigid robots always agreeing, and we certainly don't become the Borg. You would have to have a lobotomy to agree with your fellow church members or your priests on everything. But, I think 'one mind' is seeing the world through the eyes of love, a radically as Paul says – regard other as better than yourselves. **One mind is not voting the same way or kneeling vs. standing at a game.**

**Philippians 2 continues talking about Jesus** - *who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself.*

I don't care about your politics and you should not care about mine. Well, not exactly – politics is important for the way it opens us up as a beloved community. Politics that tilts us toward serving church and world is not skybala (remember last week's word – garbage). Are your political views giving you the heart of a servant for your family, community and world? Is your heart open to the widow, alien, and stranger? If your politics mainly makes you feel 'right' and derisive of the other side, you're probably 'wrong' when it comes to being a servant.

**How Paul thought of himself as a servant.** Saul was a super devoted Jew bent on destroying the Church as younger man, but by the time he wrote Philippians he had been renamed as Paul. He was a little bit more seasoned in his later years, but no less emphatic. His jail time freed him up to write his letter to the Philippians. His straddling of two worlds - Roman and Jewish - helped him see how the message of the Gospel of Christ was truly portable across cultures. He wanted to serve Jews and Gentiles alike. Much of his writing is a constant struggle to figure this cultural tension out. Maybe some things bug you about Paul. Maybe you could give him some credit – he was tirelessly trying to open the Gospel for all people. If he did not have the heart of a servant; he would not have cared so much. Without God giving Paul the heart of a servant, he would have happily continued murdering Christians.

**Serving can sometimes hurt.** Paul learned a secret as he moldered in jail – suffering does not have the final word. We are built not only to handle a great deal of suffering, but also we can thrive in the midst of suffering when we keep our eyes on God. He went so far as to say in Chapter 1 that we have been granted the privilege to suffer for God! Philippians 4 says, *I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do all this through him who gives me strength. I, Todd, say that God is our strength and refuge. Don't let pain and suffering cause you to take your eyes off your source and strength. Let pain be pain and nothing more.*

**Serving makes the Gospel relevant / serving is political.** Your politics are important and becomes more important if they are a vehicle blessing the church and world. What makes Paul work so powerful is not his collection of biases (which are many), but his radical commitment to making Jesus known. **Servanthood makes us and God glad, and serving is 'political'.** Polis, the etymological root word of politics, means body of citizens. The church is a polis. We get stronger or sicker *together*. Philippians deeply influenced MLK when he wrote to his fellow white clergy in "Letter from Birmingham Jail". He encouraged his fellow white clergy to see themselves as prisoners until all people were free. That is a servant's heart and that is political.

**Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.** As Paul says at the end of the lesson today - *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* If you want to be a servant to God, take the form of a servant by emptying yourself of your perspective, emptying yourself of your entitlement, so that you may be filled up with connections to your fellow God-bearers. This may a little dramatic, but those connections will change the world.

**Stewardship and servanthood.** Finally, we are in stewardship season. And yes we want you to pledge St. Timothy's. Your money enables us to continue the work of the Gospel. I would like you to see stewardship through the lens of servanthood. Your financial generosity frees our community to serve the world. When you give your time, talent and treasure, you empower servanthood, which is a demonstration of God's generosity.

Peace my friends, Todd