In Full Accord September 27, 2026

Scripture: Philippians 2:1-13

[1] Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort in love, any sharing in the Spirit, any sympathy, [2] complete my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, being united, and agreeing with each other. [3] Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. [4] Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others. [5] Adopt the attitude that was in Christ Jesus:
[6] Though he was in the form of God, he did not consider being equal with God something to exploit. [7] But he emptied himself by taking the form of a slave and by becoming like human beings. When he found himself in the form of a human, [8] he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore, God highly honored him and gave him a name above all names, [10] so that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might bow [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
[12] Therefore, my loved ones, just as you always obey me, not just when I am present but now even more while I am away, carry out your own salvation with fear and trembling. [13] God is the one who enables you both to want and to actually live out his good purposes.



Last Sunday we began our "Pressing On" series with "Striving Side by Side." After talking about his own mission to serve Christ by continuing to minister to the Philippians and others even while he was in prison, Paul then shifted the focus, encouraging those in the Philippian church and those in communities of faith today to strive side by side to live our lives in a manner worthy of Christ's gospel. The call to unity and to be of one mind and spirit is fleshed out in greater detail as we turn to Philippians 2 and to today's message. As we do so, let us pray…



God, although you are almighty and all-powerful, with all the influence and status that the name implies, you refused to pull rank or to parade your power among us. Instead, you chose to step down into our experience, living among us, as one of us, with all the struggle and suffering that goes with being human.

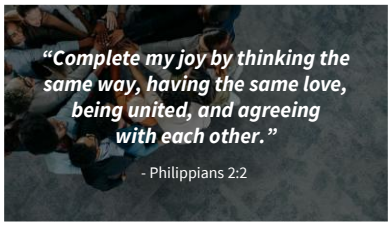
More than that, you adopted the role of slave, washing feet, serving people of no reputation or social standing, and giving of yourself completely. As incredible as it sounds, you are the God who serves, and we can respond in no other way than to give ourselves to you. And now, O God, I ask that you would bless the words of my mouth and that the meditation of all of our hearts would be pleasing in your sight. You are our rock and our redeemer, our Christ and our king. Amen.

As we begin, an illustration about living in full accord. This phrase needs a little explanation as we begin this time together. On Monday a great counter-example of what it means and looks like to live in full accord was shared. Sometimes understanding the opposite allows us to understand the example. So please allow me to relay a similar scenario that first shares what it is not like to live in full accord. In the choir at the church down the street, there are some wonderful singers. But one soprano is just excellent. She has the most beautiful voice in all of South Dakota. Now, she could sing really loud, clearly being heard above all the other voices. So loud, in fact, one cannot hear most of the other voices. This is not living or, in this case, singing in full accord.

To sing in full accord would be to use one's gift for singing, while also allowing others to use their gifts for singing too. A choir blends voices not just so that all fit in, but so that there is room to elevate one another's gifts or voices.

So to sing as a part of the choir, in this example, sometimes calls one to reign in one's ego or pride to allow others space for their voices to be heard. To sing this way, in full accord, it also brings honor to the music and to the one who composed it. It was arranged and composed a certain way, to be sung in parts and in harmony. To be faithful to the music is to be in full accord with all those in the choir, to the music itself, and to the composer. With this understanding in place, we turn to our Epistle reading for today.

Tuning to verse 1, we are reminded of some of the reasons why we live out faith our in community with God and with one another. In communion with God and with one another we find encouragement, comfort, sharing, and sympathy. Paul then offers an invitation in verse 2 to *"Complete my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, being united, and agreeing with each other."* Paul longs to see the church be all that God intended it to be. That would bring Paul great joy.



Now, before delving into what Paul is asking in this verse, let us be clear about what Paul is NOT asking for. Paul is not trying to remove all of our differences, making us exactly the same. As we are many parts that make up the body of Christ, we each offer a particular set of gifts. This diversity is beautiful and wonderful. The rich tapestry of gifts makes the church a vibrant and multi-faceted place. Paul is speaking here in a more collective than individual way. He is beginning to lean into last week's call to be of one mind and spirit. In the community of faith, we should all have the mind and spirit of Christ. To think like Christ, that should be our same way of thinking. To love like Christ, that should be how we love all the time. To be united like Christ was united with his followers, that is how we should be united together today. To agree like Christ, that is to live aligned with God's will and way. So, how do we achieve or accomplish this call to be the church that God intends us to be?

In a practical sense, unity with one another begins with our unity in Christ. For each of us to be one in mind and spirit with Christ, we must begin by setting our minds on Christ each day. Now, for some that might be spending time with Jesus each night before going to bed. For others, it is starting the day spending some time with Jesus. And maybe over the noon hour works best for others. Maybe for some folks, this one-on-one time includes a prayer and reading the Bible. For others it might be reading a devotional and thanking God for the blessings of the day.

While we each may find a different time of day and may have different ways of connecting to Jesus, the bottom line is the same: We must all be intentional with our daily efforts to know Jesus more and more so that we can be more Christlike in our daily lives. Through this intentional, daily one-on-one time, we are claiming that the day ahead or the part of the day yet to come or the day to come tomorrow can only be lived for God if we focus our hearts and minds on Christ.

We also remember the stories and things of God regularly to help counter our tendency to forget our faith in the midst of our everyday living. The voices and noise of the world never stops. It is constant. If we don't remind ourselves again and again of the things of God, the ways of selfishness, greed, and other worldly struggles will take over. The psalmist writes in Psalm 78, *"Listen, my people, to my teaching; tilt your ears toward the words of my mouth."* It is a call to fill out ears and therefore our hearts with the stories and teaching of the Bible. Later in the Psalm, the people are reminded of God's mighty acts on behalf of the people of God. While this is good for our faith too, we also have our personal encounters with God and experiences of faith that we need to remember often because these also help us stay connected to God and to our faith.

In order to fix our heart and minds on Christ, in order to live each day according to God's will and way, Paul points us towards humility. In verse 3 the apostle puts it this way: *"Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves."* Now, this is not a call to totally abandon ourselves, depriving our own needs so that we can meet other people's needs. While the translation being used today may lead us in this direction, other translations add nuance and greater detail and understanding. On Monday, for example, as we were studying the texts for the week, one translation instructed us not to think only of ourselves, but in humility to think of others too. Another translation added a question. It was this: "Do you love me enough to help me?" That question made us pause and think. Do we love others more than we love ourselves, so that it might be possible to meet other's needs and not just our own?



As we expand on Paul's thinking here, it is more than just setting ourselves aside or being willing to have less so that others can have some. These are both acts of humility. The idea of thinking of others more than self would also include setting aside our need to be right. It would include setting aside our need to have it our way. It would include setting aside our need to be in control so that things are done as we think they should be done. Imagine for a moment what our world would be like – in business, in politics, in the church, in our homes – if we set aside the things of this world, set our hearts and minds on Christ, and embraced humility, self-sacrifice, and unity! This would lean more into Paul's instruction in verse 4, where we are invited not to just think of our own good but to watch out for what is better for other people. This is what it means to be the body of Christ, to live in full accord with one another and with the Lord our God.

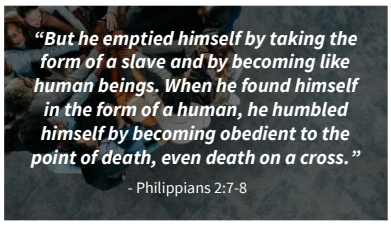


Some Christians strive to be humble servants, seeking other's good above their own. That includes some in this community of faith. But for most of us, myself included, there are times when we choose self over the other. There are times when go beyond simply meeting our needs, venturing into meeting wants and desires. This is why we need daily (and sometimes more often) reminders if who we are to be in Christ.

Turning to verses 5-11, Paul encourages the Philippians and all who follow Jesus to adopt the mind of Jesus. The words that we find in verses 6-11 are believed to be an early Christian hymn. Before Paul began ministering, someone wrote this song to remind other believers who they were called to be in Christ. While this hymn is about Jesus, it is also about God. We read about this in verse 6: *"Though he was in the form of God, he did not consider being equal with God something to exploit."* Here we are reminded that God Almighty is also God in the flesh, Jesus. And as God in the flesh, Jesus could have been almighty. He could have wiped away the Romans with a word. He could have restored the kingdom of Israel with a wave of the hand. But he did not. That was not Jesus' mission or purpose.



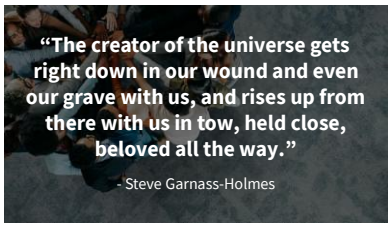
In verse 7 and 8 we begin to lean into Jesus' mission and purpose. In these verses we read, *"But he emptied himself by taking the form of a slave and by becoming like human beings. When he found himself in the form of a human, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."* Giving up all his divine power, God became vulnerable. Taking on our human form, God became willing to experiencing our brokenness. Emptying himself, God made room for feeling and connecting to our flaws, faults, and failures. God, who is infinite, emptied himself to make room for us. This making of room – it is not just so that we can come close to God. It is so we can be with God in Spirit.



And then God humbled himself, dying a most painful and humiliating death – death on a cross. In this act of emptying and making room, God became open to our sin, allowing the hurt and harm caused by sin to become real, to be felt by God, if you will. But the divine did not stop there. Through love and grace and mercy, God then forgave our sin, providing a way for us to be made new again, holy and perfect in God's sight – if but for a moment.

I believe that God knew that this was a moment and a process that would be repeated again and again and again. Sin, conviction, confession, repentance, forgiveness. Sin, conviction, confession, repentance, forgiveness. Again and again. Each time feeling the hurt, the separation, the harm. Again and again. Sin, conviction, confession, repentance, forgiveness. Again and again and again. That is how great God's love is for you and for me.

While a part of us wants God to be almighty and all-powerful, and God is certainly these things at times, God's real saving grace for you and for me is God's willingness to feel our failures and sins and to forgive them again and again. God's openness to our sin and suffering and God's sharing in these things is truly what saves us.



As one theologian said, "The creator of the universe gets right down in our wound and even our grave with us, and rises up from there with us in tow, held close, beloved all the way." What great love. This speaks of our God who humbled himself, took on flesh, and lived among us. It speaks of our God who went to the cross on our behalf and who walks with us now in all of life's trials and hardships, loving us all the way.

And our response to this love? The ancient hymn writer's response? Paul's response? We find the response in verses 9-11.

Awed and amazed by this great love, we read, *"Therefore, God highly honored him and gave him a name above all names, so that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven, on earth, and under the earth might bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* At the name of Jesus, God's great love, all will one day bow in worship, all will one day proclaim that Jesus is Lord. And for us, that is our response in the present moment: to kneel in worship, to confess with our tongues that Jesus is the Lord of our life.

Our second response is to work every day, to strive side by side, to take on the same attitude that was in Christ when he was in the flesh, to daily set our heart and mind on Christ, and to be of one mind and spirit with Christ. In these ways, this ancient hymn is a model for Christian living. In humility and with deep trust in God, it is a call to step into the power we find in and through our faith. That is what Paul is talking about in verse 13, where we are reminded that it is God who enables us to live out God's purposes for our lives. When we step here, into fully living out of our faith, we find that we are just the conduit. God is the power.

Because it is a model for Christian living, it is also a call to empty ourselves. We do not get rid of who we are – our personality, our gifts, our worth in the eyes of God. We empty ourselves of status, of worldly passions, of earthly power, of pride and ego. Emptying ourselves of all that the world says is important, we come to see that our worth comes from God alone. That is how God sees us and it is how God created us: worthy of love. Knowing that our worth is found in God alone, we can let go of power, status, security, possessions – making room for God's love to flow in and through us.



When God's love is in us and flowing through us, we have the mind and spirit of Christ in us. We are in full accord with Jesus.

Our purpose and ministry align with God's will and way for us and for our world. In this place of alignment, self-sacrifice replaces selfishness. Giving and generosity triumphs over greed and accumulating. Mercy and forgiveness defeat the power of anger and revenge and holding grudges. While the ways that we live out our faith and how we share God's love may be different for each of us, we all follow the same Christ, we all seek to build the same kingdom of God here on earth. That is what it means to be in full accord. It means thinking, speaking, acting, and being as much like Christ as we can be, day in and day out. May it be so for you and for me. Alleluia and amen.

GPS – Grow, Pray, Study

1) *Grow.* When has you becoming less (so that someone can find a place) or you going without (to meet a need) led to growth in your faith? How can you do this more often?
2) *Pray.* Daily quiet time is essential to having the mind and heart of Christ. Find a little time each day this week to add to the time you spend talking to and with God.
3) *Study.* Read Philippians 2:14-18. What do these words add to your understanding of today's call to humility, sacrifice, and service? Who might find joy in your life of faith?