

WE REJOICE IN SHARING GOD'S GIFTS PHLP 2:1-18
SIXTEENTH SUN. AFTER PENTECOST SEPT 28, 2014

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, ⁸ he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Picture a gift, wrapped up, with tag on it, name on tag is yours.

What does name on gift mean? Is it for you or from you?

We might just assume our name on it means it is for us.

But if it is a gift you have taken to birthday or shower
your name on it could identify it as being from you.

Last week, in 1st chapter of Philippians, Paul addressed
our worldview, our understanding of why we are here,
which is to glorify God by receiving his gifts.

This week, chapter 2 begins with "so..." in view of that,
Paul addresses our mindset, our attitude
about what these gifts of God are for.

God's gifts to us are for us to joyfully share with others.
In my inlaw's family is birthday tradition of newspaper gifts.

Among gifts is one or more wrapped in newspaper.

These gifts will be candy or other goodies
for one with birthday to share with others at the party.
Paul shows that God's gifts to us are newspaper gifts to share,
serving others with attitudes of unity, obedience and joy.

WE UNITE TO SERVE OTHERS WITH GOD'S GRACE
JESUS OBEDIENTLY SERVED US WITH HIS GREATNESS
WE JOYFULLY SERVE IN THANKS FOR GOD'S GIFTS

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Paul says do nothing from rivalry or conceit.

I saw cartoon showing Bible study leader saying,
"Christian maturity includes humility.

If you had memorized as many books of the Bible
as me, you would know that."

What if I try to be better Christian out of rivalry or conceit?

Trying to be Christian by focusing on self doesn't work.

In this letter, Paul mentions Philippians suffer, like him in prison.

They were not in prison but had other problems.

We have our own kind of problems & suffering too.

Suffering or pain tends to make us pull in, focus on self,
not feel like being outgoing.

Yet, when we are suffering it feels good to have others
who come to us, care about us.

Paul writes, "if there is any encouragement in Christ... There is.

We don't give up in despair because he came to help us.

Is comfort from his love even though we alienate others.

Is participation, fellowship in his Spirit,

who has come to live & work in us to unite us with God.

Is affection and sympathy from God who cares about us.

How do we receive and experience this encouragement,
comfort, fellowship, affection & sympathy of Christ?

Through fellow believers who share it with me.

So, all this is for me to share with others too.
When I do, then there is one more thing: joy
that is made complete by harmony and unity.
Being Christian, child of God, is never about just Jesus & me.
It is always about Jesus and us.
So as we think about our plan for our spiritual lives,
we don't think just about what I need or want,
but about others, fellow believers in the church
those I know who need Jesus.
We think about who we share the same faith & worship
and Holy Communion with,
who I can encourage in fellowship,
how I can share in group Bible study or teaching,
how I can use God's gifts to serve, who I can pray for,
who I can invite to worship with me,
what resources can I use as we work together?
When we think of others, not just ourselves,
we think of all that we have as newspaper gifts,
not just this is mine but this is mine to share.
Because, Paul says, this is the mind of Christ,

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who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with
God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but made himself nothing, taking the form
of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in
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of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted
him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on
earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ
is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Have you ever heard of a dog in a manger?
Expression comes from an old story about a dog
who found soft place to lie down in manger full of hay.
When a cow came to eat, dog growled & chased away.
Dog in a manger is one who selfishly keeps for self
what it doesn't need & keeps it from those who need it.
Jesus, born & laid in manger, was not a dog in a manger.
He was willing to give up his divine prerogatives for a while

so we could have what we need: salvation from our sins.
Friend who is missionary in Papua New Guinea visited recently,
she had with her was men's necklace with horizontal bars,
each wood bar stands for two pigs they have given away.
Great men in community will have long breastplate.
Sign of greatness is not how much they have
but how much they have given away.
Cross is symbol of Jesus greatness
because of how much he has given away.
Jesus is great, eternal, almighty God. But he didn't consider this
something he had to grab on to saying, "This is mine"
Instead he was willing to lay all his glory on the shelf
in order to humbly become an obedient servant for us.
Unlike either son in parable in today's Gospel reading,
he said, "I will work in the vineyard." and he did.
He served God by serving us.
He obeyed all of God's law in place of us who disobey.
He obeyed Father's will to point of dying
in place of us, because of our deadly sins.
Having humbly given up everything for us
he put himself in a position to receive
He received from the Father exaltation and glory,
and so receives from all creation thanks and praise.
Letter to Hebrews says he did it not just for the glory
but for the sake of the joy set before him.
We are called to have the same mind of Christ,
to focus not on self but humbly & obediently serve God
by serving others, in a way that results in joy.

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¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or questioning, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷
Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial

offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

v. 12 sounds strange to my Lutheran ears.

I am supposed to work out my own salvation?

If my salvation depended on my own works,

I certainly would do it with fear and trembling

Never knowing if I am good enough, In fact: not.

v. 13 sounds more like it. It is God who works in me

both to will & work what he wants. God does it all for me.

But together it sounds like the Roman Catholic teaching

that I am saved by doing good works God helps me do.

Part of what solves confusion is understanding word salvation

means not just forgiveness but wholeness and health.

Is also important that “you” here is not singular but plural.

Oh, problem is if I am thinking of just myself again.

Paul is telling Philippian church as a whole

that their wholeness and health needs to be worked out

by their doing what God is doing in them.

Because we each have salvation as a free gift,

we have work to do, sharing salvation with each other.

so together we have comfort, encouragement and joy.

He could have told them, “Don’t be a dog in a manger.”

Instead he uses different expression that may have been

familiar to them. Listen to verses from Deut. 32:

⁴ A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he.

⁵ They have dealt corruptly with him;

they are no longer his children because they are blemished;

they are a crooked and twisted generation.

⁶ Do you thus repay the LORD, you foolish and senseless people?

Is not he your father, who created you,

You can hear this verse reflected in what Paul writes.

He says don’t be like that, responding that way to God.

Instead be unblemished children

who are shining examples of God’s truth and love

for those who are part of a crooked & twisted generation.

This is what God calls us, his children, to do in his vineyard.

In parable in Gospel, why do you suppose

when one son said “No” Father didn’t say do it anyway?

We aren’t really working with grapes but with people.

Does God need grumpy, grabby, crabby workers?

Why do you think son changes his mind and goes?

It is loving response to his father's love for him
so he works not with grumbling but with joy.

This what it is like to have the mind of Christ.

God gives us his love, grace & forgiveness for Christ's sake
in his word of gospel, in Holy Communion.

This changes our hearts & minds to respond with thanks.

In v. 17, Paul talks about sacrifices.

As Philippians know, in O.T. were two types of sacrifices.

One type was required, sacrifices to pay for sin,
which were bulls & lambs killed & burned.

We don't do that anymore. Jesus is final sacrifice
who by his blood pays to take away sins of whole world.

Other type of O.T. sacrifice was voluntary thank offering,
which included other food & drinks poured out.

Paul says to Philippians, your faith is this kind of response
and I am like a drink offering poured on top.

I am glad and rejoice with you. Rejoice with me.

This is the kind of offering still included in our worship,
a way of joyfully saying "thank you" to God.

The mind of Christ is getting joy out of serving others in love.

Jesus said If you keep my commandments, you will
abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments
and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that
my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. (John 15:11)

God gives us gifts with our name on them to share with others.

WE UNITE TO SERVE OTHERS WITH GOD'S GRACE

God's encouragement & love is not just an individual thing
but something we joyfully unite to share

because thinking of others is the mind of Christ Jesus who
(JESUS) OBEDIENTLY SERVED US WITH HIS GREATNESS

As Christ gave up self for a while and was given glory,
we give up self-centeredness and are given joy.

Now **WE JOYFULLY SERVE IN THANKS FOR GOD'S GIFTS**

We rejoice together when we serve and sacrifice together,
united with Christ who served and suffered for us
to give us the gifts we share with others.