

**Philippians 2:1-13 (NRSVue)**  
**"Imitating Christ's Humility"**  
**Bill Bray, Worship Leader**  
**World Communion Sunday**  
**October 1, 2023**

It would have been so very easy to prepare a message for today's scripture by simply rereading Philippians 2: 1-13 over and over and adding and amen and at that point just moving on with our service.

In all truthfulness, I could not really think of anything else to say about today's scripture, as there are hardly any other pieces of Scripture that can compare to this chapter in Philippians for its beauty and importance to our lives in the understanding of our Lord and Savior, Jesus.

However, I realized that to delve into this letter from Paul will be the very best message for us to hear on this World Communion Sunday.

Remember that this letter was written by Paul to the people of Philippi while he was in prison, most likely in Rome. It is important to know that such letters were meant to be read aloud to the people and not to be read as a text message to be read privately.

Let us listen, now, to this letter as if Paul was writing to the people of the Southampton Congregational Church.

Listen, again as Paul calls us to shape our lives to imitate Christ's humility:

PAUL SPEAKS: "If, then, there is any comfort in Christ, any consolation from love, any partnership in the Spirit, any tender affection 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 empty conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests but to the interests of others."

Paul, then directs us to be an example of Christ himself:

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,"

What was this "same mind" that was in Jesus, that Paul asks us to have within ourselves?

We look next to verse 6 where we hear:

"who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped,"

So taking these phrases together we hear;

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped,"

Paul is asking us to be like Jesus and to do as Jesus did when he continues with:  
“but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, assuming human likeness.”  
Is this what Paul is asking the Philippians – and us today – to do as we follow Jesus?

I believe that God did so much more than become one of us in Jesus with all the limitations and hardships of our daily lives, God:  
“...humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.” Are we willing to do that?

When Jesus died on the cross, he was just one of three people who died on a cross that day. What was different about the death of Jesus was, of course, that the other two men died for crimes which they had committed, while God in the human form of Jesus died for some fake charges, but more importantly, for all of our sins so that we might not have to do so.

In 1 John 4: 9 – 11 we read:  
“: God having sent his Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.”

Paul continues with his very important message to the Philippians, and to us, when he tells them that Jesus did not just die for our sins, which would have been so very wonderful, but that would have missed the point as he continues:  
“Therefore, God exalted him even more highly and gave him the name that is above every other name, so that at the name given to Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ in Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

It so very wonderful that God, in the person of Jesus, went through all that he did for us. It is Paul’s desire as he writes to the people of Philippi, and therefore to us in Southampton, that we seek to imitate God/Jesus in how we behave towards each other.

Finally, Paul continues in his letter  
“Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence but much more now in my absence, work on 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.”

What then is the message which Paul has sent to the Philippians and to the Church in Southampton? I believe that it is that through the expansive love of God in the person of Jesus. that we should live our lives to do more and more for others as we think less and less of ourselves. We should not be discouraged when we find it difficult to do so, because God is always with us to encourage us on our life’s path.

As we join with the world in communion, this day; let us claim Philippians 2:1-13 as a guide for our life.

May it be so!  
Amen.