

Trinity 22, 2019  
Love Within the Body  
Philippians 1:3-11  
St. Andrew's Church, Jacksonville, OR  
By Fr. Bill Baker

Listen carefully...listen prayerfully as we hear the opening words of St. Paul once again this morning, keeping in mind the bigger picture that you are part of the body of Christ...a body that has its roots in the days of old...even Philippi itself.

*"I thank my God," Paul says, "in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."*

What a joy it is that Paul is expressing! To know the truth of Jesus Christ and be able to share that with brothers and sisters who are of the same understanding. I can imagine Paul's familiarity and closeness to the parishioners at Philippi as he articulates his love to a congregation that supports his Gospel endeavors, whose endeavors he also confirms. Paul is no stranger to the unpleasant physical discomforts of preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ. The world Paul lived in was against the message he was led to preach; yet there was a group who were willing to hold him up and meet his needs. Paul had a special connection...a special relationship with the brethren at Philippi and it is the love of Christ that shined in their midst.

I said that I could imagine Paul's familiarity and closeness to the parishioners at Philippi. When I read Paul's words in preparation for today I could not help but recall some of the intimate conversations I have had as of late with members of this church. The Christian message, the Christian camaraderie, the Christian life...are all right here. Paul's connection with the brethren of his day is no different for us in this day. It is the same church and the same Lord Jesus Christ that holds us all together as one. We are a family in partnership for the Gospel of Jesus Christ! No one can take that from us...it is eternal.

*"And I am sure of this, Paul continues, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me*

*to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.”* It is your love and support, your generosity and compassion, your adherence to the truth and good news of Jesus Christ that assists myself and Fr. Chris as we continue in the journey we are called to tread. And do not think such encouragement is to us only. I have heard from many of you how this congregation has become a family...a real family...brothers and sisters that can be counted on as we all walk the paths that bare our footprints.

*“For God is my witness, we hear from St. Paul once again, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ...”* I was so blessed by the first session of our bible study through the book of John on last Tuesday. You were so open and willing to lay everything on the table so as to get to the truth. Wanting to be transparent you asked questions that left you vulnerable, seeking the wisdom of others you inquired into areas you were uncomfortable with. No bashing came from your lips...love only, was your response. You are seeking the knowledge and discernment St. Paul was praying into the lives of the Philippians and today that same prayer is penetrating our hearts.

Our Epistle ends with Paul praying that we be *“filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”* You see, it is not just good teaching that brings glory to God, but the upright life that comes out of it and not the kind of uprightness that tries in vain to grow without Christ but a life lived seeking God and living in His will. It is the gifts of God bestowed upon you that will bring glory to God because it is your testimony lived out that will bare witness clearing the path ahead for others to follow, just as the Philippians have done for us. We must share the love we find in Christ with those around us. Only in doing so will the light overcome the darkness of those who are suffering without Christ.

There was a farmer who grew excellent quality corn. Every year he won the award for the best-grown corn. One year a newspaper reporter

interviewed him and learned something interesting about how he grew it. The reporter discovered that the farmer shared his seed corn with his neighbors. "How can you afford to share your best seed corn with your neighbors when they are entering corn in competition with yours each year?" the reporter asked.

"Why sir," said the farmer, "Didn't you know? The wind picks up pollen from the ripening corn and swirls it from field to field. If my neighbors grow inferior corn, cross-pollination will steadily degrade the quality of my corn. If I am to grow good corn, I must help my neighbors grow good corn."

So it is with our lives... Those who want to live meaningfully and well must help enrich the lives of others, for the value of a life is measured by the lives it touches. And those who choose to be happy must help others find happiness, for the welfare of each is bound up with the welfare of all...

- Author Unknown (Proverbs 11:24-25)

And so, it is love that we must share. But there are lots of kinds of love. We love family, we love friends, some of us love long walks in the woods and others love chocolate. But the love found within the body of Christ is a special kind of love that encompasses an eternal understanding of what we are up against in this world. We see things differently because our perspective is of a Godly perspective where the justification of lies hold no weight in the moral fabric of our Christian stance. We are there for each other in this fight and it is the Love of God within us that gives strength to our souls. We are brothers and sisters. We are family and we know the struggles of living in a world that is so contrary to the truth.

And what are we to do as a family living in a world of bad seeds? Share the seeds of eternal life and pollinate the whole world with the love of Jesus Christ and watch your family grow.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.