

EASTSIDE COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH
SUNDAY, JANUARY 31, 2021
SERMON: "WHAT'S IN YOUR CUP?"
TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

In Mark 10, we have an interesting story of how two brothers, James and John, approach their master and make a rather bold request. They start the request with the statement, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask!" Jesus goes along with the request and asks them exactly what they want. "We want to be on your left and right hand when you are in your glory." Jesus questioned the brothers if they could "drink from his cup?" They said that they were willing. The two were eager to prove that they would sacrifice, work hard, and do what was necessary to have a place of importance in Christ's kingdom. It was a very worldly idea at the time. Jesus responded and told them that they would go through all these hardships, but that would not necessarily earn them a spot of authority, honour, or power.

I love the phrase, "Can you drink from my cup?" I am reminded of Jesus, suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, asking if the Father would take the "cup" away. An honest question, a human question, that Jesus made of the Father, but Jesus immediately put the request within the will of the Father.

As we continue along in Philippians, you should be seeing themes of unity coming through. Unity is not about always agreeing, but rather being of one mind for ministry. As we noted last week, for Paul the most important event to happen is not being safe or comfortable, but it is the fact that all the good and bad of life that a person encounters, is used to propel the Gospel of Jesus forward.

The only way we can be unified is for us to have one mind...the mind of Christ!

Our scripture lesson today is a beautiful, hymn-like passage where Paul tells us what it means to be "...like Christ." Let's read it:

⁵ You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

**⁶ Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.**

**⁷ Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.**

When he appeared in human form,

**⁸ he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.**

**⁹ Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,**

**¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,**

**¹¹ and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.**

Paul's words to the Philippians (and believers today) have always been "counter-cultural." Paul's teachings cover how the church can be unified, how we relate to each other, and how we relate to the world. I wonder how shocked we are today to really understand the introduction to this teaching in vs. 3 when Paul tells us:

³ Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.

Our world today is very much centered on the individual! For years, the financial advice has been “pay yourself first.” Winning is often everything, even if you have to lie, cheat, and steal. Some of the top reality/game shows are based on coming out on top regardless of the consequences as long as you “outwit, outlast, outplay.” For a game, that is fine, but it throws a few wrenches into our lives when that is the unspoken (or blatantly spoken) rules of living life.

It is sad when you see this invade a church. A huge area of struggle within a church is often finances. It doesn't take much for a once financially “care-free” church to suddenly be in financial struggle. Sadly, when this happens, often churches will get a “survivor” mentality and we start looking at our comfort, our needs, how will we survive? Ministry stops incase too much money is spent and we jeopardize our very existence. If that takes hold, the church might as well close their doors. When we cease doing ministry for fear of running out of money, we cease being any use to the kingdom of God.

If our identity is Christ, what does that mean? Paul now gives a beautiful teaching on it.

Lord As Servant

I believe one of the greatest testimonies we have to the world is the testimony of being servants. Christianity is based on the fact that we look to serve those around us even if it costs us. Much of the time we are willing to part with “things” or with finances. Often we hold back time and energy.

Paul reminds us of the “cost” of being the “way, the truth, and the life” that Jesus was willing to pay for us. Have you ever really stopped to consider the whole picture of the price that Jesus paid? We know the events of Easter. We recognize his death. Stop and consider that Jesus left the glory

of heaven to do all this. I realize it can be troublesome to understand and worthy of being a sermon or sermon series in its own right, but before the "Word became flesh and dwelt among us" the Word was divine. Pre-incarnate Jesus, the God the Son, was divine. He was not "like" God, He "was" God. It would be so nice to have insight into the mind of a 1st century Philippian, because they would have had very little trouble with this. They were use to the gods becoming human. In fact, in their society there were actually very few atheists.

Today we are fighting a society that is self-indulgent, believing that they are the be-all to the universe. A society that has deceived itself into atheism. The arguments they make are generally cliché and have been answered over and over. They ignore the proof that is found naturally in nature and the cosmos around them because they refuse to even ponder the possibility of the divine, relegating God to myth status. And we stop and wonder why the world is in the chaotic shape that it is in.

We have the Divine, the all-powerful, all-knowing, all-present Logos/Word willing to become a finite human to make a connection with us and to teach us about God.

Jesus "emptied" himself of the privileges, the rights, the rank he held and became a servant. The Messiah did not come with unlimited power to force a world to believe, but came as a helpless baby, born to a non-descript blue collar family from the wrong side of the tracks. He would be seen in light of being "illegitimate." He took on all the trials and struggles that humans face. He opened himself up to mocking, to ridicule, to abuse. Why would Jesus do this when many of his followers are embarrassed to be seen as "religious?" But he did it. He became a servant and modeled what it meant to serve others.

THE MIND OF CHRIST

So Paul called the Philippians and still calls His Church today to “have the mind of Christ.” When was the last time you examined your heart, your life, your own personal ministry and knew you had truly “emptied yourself to become like Jesus?” Ask the hard questions! Many times the truth is not in the “I am willing...” statements but rather in the “I won’t” or the “I don’t want to...” statements. Jesus chose to see others as better than himself (v.3). When we follow Jesus and adopt his example, we very quickly realize there is not much room for self-indulgent, self-centered behaviour.

There is a classic hymn written by Frances R. Havergal entitled “I Gave My Life for Thee.” The lines remind us of Jesus’ sacrifice and what he gave up so that we could have our sins forgiven and receive the gift of salvation. Any time we sing it, we probably should be overwhelmed by gratitude and a bit of guilt if we truly understand the questions:

**1 I gave My life for thee,
My precious blood I shed,
That thou might'st ransomed be,
And quickened from the dead;
I gave, I gave My life for thee,
What hast thou giv'n for Me?**

**2 My Father's house of light,
My glory circled throne,
I left for earthly night,
For wanderings sad and lone;
I left, I left it all for thee,
Hast thou left aught for Me?**

**3 I suffered much for thee,
More than thy tongue can tell,
Of bitt' rest agony,
To rescue thee from hell;
I've borne, I've borne it all for thee,
What hast thou borne for Me?**

**4 And I have brought to thee,
Down from My home above,
Salvation full and free,
My pardon and My love;
I bring, I bring rich gifts to thee,
What hast thou brought to Me?**

As a follower of Christ, when Jesus asks you if you are willing to drink from His cup...what will your honest answer be?

Let's pray...