SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SEPTEMBER 27, 2020

ST ANDREW’S UNITED, ST THOMAS

with Rev Dr Donna Kerrigan



**Paul’s Letter to the Philippians 2:1-13**

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion 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 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. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

*who, though he was in the form of God,  
   did not regard equality with God  
   as something to be exploited,  
but emptied himself,  
   taking the form of a slave,  
   being born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,  
   he humbled himself  
   and became obedient to the point of*

*death—even death on a cross.*

*Therefore God also highly exalted him  
   and gave him the name  
   that is above every name,  
so that at the name of Jesus  
   every knee should bend,  
   in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
and every tongue should confess  
   that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
   to the glory of God the Father.*

Do you remember the early days of COVID, when we were all under lockdown? Folks did some peculiar things. We stocked up on toilet paper, baked bread and cookies, then organized cup-boards so we had room for all the TP and baked goods! There was something about being under house arrest that caused us to get creative and organize our stuff and our thoughts.

The Apostle Paul, confined to a prison cell, found his sanity in creativity and organization too. He wrote a beautiful, creative letter pouring out his love for the Philippians. As he organized his thoughts he also helped the community get organized, hopefully to *stay* organized, as the true, functioning body of Christ on earth.

Paul’s organizational principles are easy to remember: Be of the same mind, same love, same goal—to build up the community, not just the self.

But when he says, *“Let the same mind be in you that was in Jesus Christ,”* then we’re in different territory. As any congregation can tell you, we’re hard put to all be of the same mind, love and goal. But participating in the mind that was in Jesus?

Frankly, that blows my mind! Doubtless, that’s just what Paul intended.

The truly important thing for Paul is not the behaviour of any given congregation. It’s the identity of the One we follow. So he writes for the Philippians—and for us—the “Christ hymn,” which may have been circulating just a decade or two after the crucifixion.

If the early Christians were “of one mind” this is what they believed, with all their hearts:

*Jesus is God.*

*Jesus is eternal.*

*He humbled himself in taking on human form and dying the death of a slave.*

*His humility is his exaltation.*

*In worshiping him, we participate in the glory of God*.

These are the central truths of Christian faith. And they are breath-taking. Who would not want to join in the eternal and universal act of worship?

Next week, October 4th, we celebrate Worldwide Communion Sunday. I’ve been asked to celebrate the sacrament at First United on Sunday, and First allows a limited number of people to be present in the sanctuary. Perhaps you would like to be present. As long as safety is assured, you will most certainly be welcomed.

For those who don’t attend personally, I will also celebrate the sacrament in our own St Andrew’s sanctuary, and have it recorded and available through our web-site. If you tune in, you might like to have bread and grape juice with which to participate. I hope you can make it a safe family celebration.

Never in our lifetime have we needed worldwide communion quite so much. Never have we needed quite so much to proclaim Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God. Amen.