



Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter

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Understanding the New Testament Philippians

⁹ *Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:9-11 NRSV*

Scholars agree that the Letter to the Philippians was written by Paul. However, like 2 Corinthians, it seems to be a conflation of two letters. In the first two chapters Paul is expressing his thanks to the Philippians for their support of him while he is in prison. We don't know why Paul was imprisoned and we don't know where he was imprisoned. In verse 1.13 he references preaching the Gospel to the Imperial Guard which makes scholars believe that he was being held in an Imperial City, possibly Rome, Ephesus or Caesarea. Paul sees this as suffering for the sake of the Gospel and proclaims that his imprisonment has simply given him access to a new group of people to evangelize: Caesar's Praetorium Guard. He also mentions a disciple named Epaphroditus beginning in 2:25. He describes him as a messenger from Philippi and a minister to Paul. Epaphroditus apparently came to Paul to deliver some gifts and then to help Paul. In the process he became very ill and almost died. Epaphroditus is upset because the Church at Philippi has learned of his illness and its members are distressed. He regrets that he has caused the people at Philippi this distress and is heading back to Philippi. However, in verse 4:18 Paul refers to receiving gifts from Philippi delivered by Epaphroditus. Accordingly, scholars believe that chapters 3 and 4 represent a letter of thanks sent when the gift was delivered and chapters 1 and 2 represent a letter sent either with Epaphroditus when he returned to Philippi or a letter sent through someone else, possibly Timothy, after Epaphroditus returned to Philippi.

One of the principal themes in Philippians is that suffering for the Gospel is an inevitable result of accepting Christ. This is not an attempt to glorify the idea of suffering but to explain the inevitable effect of preaching the Gospel and to assure the Church that it was not a sign of the weakness of God or Christ. In the eyes of many in that culture, the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus was an indication that he was a false God or that

he had no support from God. Recall how the disciples fled after the arrest of Jesus. The Messiah was not supposed to be arrested and crucified therefore, in the minds of many, Jesus could not have been the Messiah. Likewise, for the opponents of the church, they would point to Paul's imprisonment as a sign of God's disfavor.

Preaching the Gospel would bring the Church into conflict with the local Jewish communities, into conflict with those who worshipped other Gods and often into conflict with Roman authorities as the Roman Emperors were treated as living Gods. We can get some sense of the peril associated with preaching the Gospel by looking at the correspondence between the emperor Trajan and one of his administrators, Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia. Although this correspondence is dated around 112 CE, perhaps 50 or more years after the writing of Philippians, the attitudes expressed reflect just how precarious life could be in the Roman Empire.

Pliny, a shameless "brown-noser," is constantly asking Trajan for guidance. He writes to Trajan to ask how Christians should be treated and, in the course of that request, explains what he has been doing:

In the meantime, this is the plan which I have adopted in the case of those Christians who have been brought before me. I ask them whether they are Christians, if they say "Yes," then I repeat the question the second time, and also a third -- warning them of the penalties involved; and if they persist, I order them away to prison. For I do not doubt that -- be their admitted crime what it may -- their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy surely ought to be punished.

Curious as to why these Christians should be so persistent and obstinate in their beliefs, he undertakes an "investigation:"

I then thought it the more needful to get at the facts behind their statements. Therefore I placed two women, called "deaconesses," under torture, but I found only a debased superstition carried to great lengths, so I postponed my examination, and immediately consulted you.

Trajan offered Pliny the following guidance:

You have adopted the right course, my dear Pliny, in examining the cases of those cited before you as Christians; for no hard and fast rule can be laid down covering such a wide question. The Christians are not to be hunted out. If brought before you, and the offense is proved, they are to be punished, but with this reservation -- if any one denies he is a Christian, and makes it clear he is not, by offering prayer to our gods, then he is to be pardoned on his recantation, no matter how suspicious his past.

Over time, being a Christian was a crime punishable by imprisonment or death. As noted by Pliny, just being obstinate in their belief was a sufficient basis for punishment since such persons were likely trouble-makers of some sort.

Paul challenged the Philippians to imitate Christ as they live out the Gospel. In doing so he incorporates an early Christian hymn, cited above, that is probably one of the most beloved passages in the New Testament. For our sake, Christ accepted the ultimate humiliation and punishment despite being the equal of God. Therefore the Church ought to be selfless in its living out of the Gospel.

Next week: Colossians

Christians and Halloween

Christians in recent years have tended to become embroiled in issues without substance. Rather than focusing on the spreading of the Gospel and living as the body of Christ in a troubled and often uncaring world we turn to irrelevancies. Examples would be the posting of the Ten Commandments in public buildings, the teaching of evolution and geology, prayer in school and the so-called “War on Christmas.” Another example would be the fear that allowing our children to participate in Halloween activities undermines Christianity.

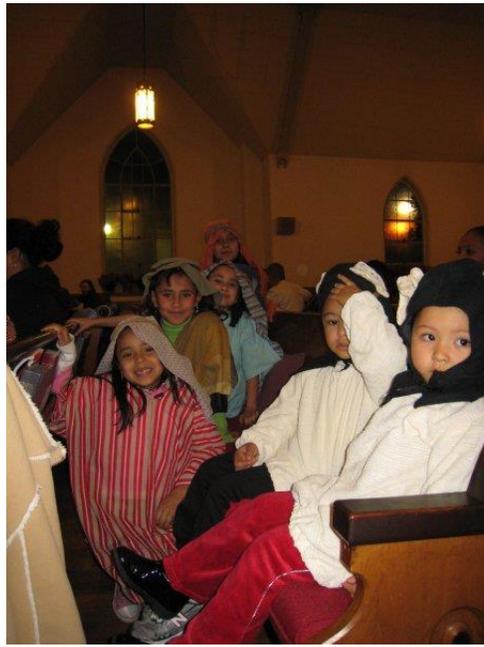
According to Britannica Online, Halloween has its origins in the Celtic festival of *Samhain*. This festival took place on November 1st, marking the end of summer. Herds were brought down from summer pastures. It was also believed that the dead would visit their old homes on this day. Masks were worn to disguise the living from the visiting ghosts. The church ultimately selected November 1st as All Saints Day, probably in an effort to supplant the pagan customs. The evening before All Saints Day was considered holy, or hallowed. Eventually it came to be known as Halloween.

The fact that a holiday we celebrate has its origins in a pagan celebration is not a basis for declaring the day “unholy” or the practice of observing Halloween “un-Christian.” The question that we should ask is, “What does the holiday mean to us?” The answer is simple. Over the last two centuries the holiday has come to be known as a day of make believe and fun. Our children, of all ages, are invited to use their imaginations to dress up and party together. It is a day when too much candy is likely to be eaten, but that can be a good thing too. Ask any kid. People laugh, enjoy one another’s company and generally a good time is had by all. The Gospels make it clear that Jesus enjoyed a good party and I suspect that he would have enjoyed the celebration of Halloween. In our world today, an excuse to have a good time sharing one another’s company is not a bad thing. It’s actually quite Christian. Have a blessed Halloween.

What Is An Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant?

If you have not heard of it yet, We are planning an Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant for Sunday, December 8th . But what is an unrehearsed Christmas Pageant?

The typical Church Christmas Pageant is a telling of the Christmas story by our children by means of a play. Usually there are about three weeks worth of chaotic rehearsals which require young children to memorize lines and where they are supposed to be during the play. The result is often quite jumbled with children showing up in the wrong places at the wrong times and forgetting their lines. None of that usually matters much to the parents and families because they simply came to see their own child anyway.



The Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant produces much the same result without all the angst associated with rehearsals and trying to get young children to memorize a script. The children dress up as Shepherds, Sheep, Stars, Angels and Wise Persons. There is a narrator to tell the story, supported by congregational singing of Christmas Carols. Everyone enjoys participating in the program (there are opportunities for adults to dress up as well) and then we break for punch and cookies. We will also provide an opportunity for children and adults to make an offering of canned food or money to support the food pantry at GraceWorks.

The pictures here will give you some idea of what is involved in the way of costumes. Julia Moore and Jeanne Rybolt are coordinating this event but will need help from as many members of the church as are willing to help to get costumes together and otherwise organize the event. Please prayerfully consider being a part of this ministry this Advent.

A Note from Julia Moore and Jeanne Rybolt

As we prepare for the Unrehearsed Christmas Pageant we could use some help collecting the following:

- Plain sheets/fabric – to make animal costumes and shepherd tunics
- Thick yarn for donkey's tails and manes
- Robes for the shepherds and innkeepers
- Head coverings – scarves, possibly towels, etc
- Crowns or something to make them from for the wise peeps
- Tinsel for halos and angel adornments
- Props (gifts from the wise peeps, staffs, very small flashlights)
- Cording/rope to hold head coverings on heads and/or close those robes
- Animal costumes (a stretch but thought we'd ask)
- Headbands suitable for holding halos
- Tulle (I'm dreaming of making at least one camel costume)
- Elastic
- Velcro
- OLD plain light colored t-shirts in various sizes (we'll probably cut them up a bit to make child sized tunics)
- Some kind of hanging rod set up
- LOTS of prayers

Thanks for your help

The Poverty and Justice Bible

The Poverty & Justice Bible is a bible that highlights each passage of scripture that deals with the issues of poverty and justice. There are more than 2000 references in scripture to poverty and justice, as opposed to four or five on such controversial subjects as homosexual acts or marriage. Yet many Christians seem to think that helping the poor is a pointless and even harmful act. As an on-going part of this newsletter, I will be providing citations to passages from the Old and New Testaments each week that deal with what scripture tells us about poverty and justice. If you are interested in learning more about *The Poverty & Justice Bible* you can check on Amazon.com or go to www.Justicebible.org.

*Job said:
²What you say is true.
No human is innocent
in the sight of God.
³Not once in a thousand times
could we win our case
if we took him to court.
⁴God is wise and powerful—
who could possibly
oppose him and win? Job 9:1-4 CEV*

The bulk of the Book of Job is made up of theological exchanges between Job and his friends. In this passage Job touches on a concept that is hard for us to accept at times and that is, I think, at the heart of our attitudes toward the poor. Job acknowledges that, in the eyes of God, we all stand in the same place. In the eyes of God we are not inherently better than those around us. Before passing judgment on others, we need to rethink who we are and how we have lived our lives.

*Don't condemn others, and God won't condemn you. ² God will be as hard on you as you are on others! He will treat you exactly as you treat them.
³ You can see the speck in your friend's eye, but you don't notice the log in your own eye. ⁴ How can you say, "My friend, let me take the speck out of your eye," when you don't see the log in your own eye? ⁵ You're nothing but show-offs! First, take the log out of your own eye. Then you can see how to take the speck out of your friend's eye. Matthew 7:1-5 CEV*

There is a great deal of judging of the poor going on in our nation today. More than that, there is a great deal of demonizing of the poor. There seems to be an assumption that anyone needing assistance must be a free loader and is somehow living a luxurious life at the expense of the taxpayers. If we take the scripture to heart we ought to at least sit back and re-evaluate our attitudes toward those who are struggling in this economy and ask ourselves how God sees these people.

Bible Study

For the last two years I have led a bible study on Thursday mornings. We have recently begun a study of the Book of Psalms. There is room for as many as would like to participate. Please call me if you have questions or simply come and be a part of our study. We meet from 10:00 to 11:30 on Thursday mornings.

I believe that study of scriptures with other Christians is an essential part of our journey as Disciples. If you would like to be a part of a bible study at another time, during the day or evening, please contact me. If we can interest four or five people in gathering at a particular time I would be glad to lead another study.

Prayer Ministry

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Sarah Jordan	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Mac McAfee	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson	

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;
- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

Up-Coming Sermons

November 3rd: It's Good to be Poor? One of the most confusing, and disturbing, passages in scripture is Luke's version of the beatitudes. It challenges our assumptions about ourselves and our worldview. My texts are Ephesians 1:11-23 and Luke 6:20-31.

November 10th : God of the Living: Because sometimes we seem to forget that. My texts are Psalm 139:1-18 and Luke 20:27-38.

Worship Leaders Schedule

November 3

Tom Moore, **Liturgist**

Betty & Herb Haynes, **Greeters**

Hal & Rachel Newman, **Ushers**

November 10

Renita Hartsock, **Liturgist**

Tom & Julia Moore, **Greeters**

Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

Announcements

You are invited to "**Old School Sunday School**" at **9:45** in the Fellowship Hall. We are singing, praying, studying scripture and caring for one another as we strive to become new people in Christ. Our curriculum is Cokesbury's Adult Bible Studies and our template is Colossians 3:12-17.

"Companions in Christ" gathers at 9:45. We are talking about how to be better companions to our fellow Christians, discover what our spiritual gifts are, and dig deeper into what we believe and why. Please come and

enjoy this time with your church family and deepen your spiritual connection with God. We will meet in the Youth Sunday School room. All are welcome!

SPRC Meeting Wednesday, November 6 at 6:00 PM. We will finish in time for Choir Practice.

Ministry with 61st Ave. UMC. The remaining date to serve and worship this year is **November 16.**

The SPRC Committee has been authorized to hire a nursery worker for Sunday mornings, but it is unlikely that person will be in place before early December. We need two adults in the Nursery when there are children present. We would like to rotate the volunteers so that the responsibility doesn't fall on the same people every week. **If you would be willing to volunteer to help with the Nursery please contact Rev. Meaker or Judy Richardson.**

Don't Forget: Daylight Savings Time ends early Sunday Morning. Please set your clocks back one hour before you go to bed so that you won't be the only one in Church!

A photographer will be coming to the church to take photographs of individuals as well as families to update our directory. A free copy of your photo will be available for download for your personal use from a designated website. **The dates for the photographs are Friday, November 1; Saturday, November 2. The scheduled time for Friday November 1st is 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM. On Saturday pictures will be taken from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. We are also scheduling appointments for Wednesday, November 6 and Thursday, November 7. The scheduled times on these days will be from 6:00 to 9:00 PM.** Photographs will be scheduled at 20 minute intervals. Signup sheets are posted on the bulletin board. You will want to take advantage of this opportunity for your personal photograph as well as for our new Directory.

Choir Rehearsal: Rehearsal is scheduled this week on **October 30 at 7:00 PM.**

October Birthdays

Elaine Rohrig, Julia Moore

Happy Birthday to both of you!