



# DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

## Sunday, September 25-October 1 (A) – Philippians 2:1-13

**Focus:** *Have the Mind of Christ*

### **word of life**

**“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.”** Philippians 2:5 (NRSV)

Read Philippians 2:1-13

The description of Paul’s visit to Philippi, a large Roman city in Macedonia, is described in Acts 16:11-40. It is in Philippi where Paul heals a slave girl, prompting her owners to drag Paul and Silas to the marketplace and have them imprisoned. While in prison, Paul prays and sings hymns. That night an earthquake occurs, but Paul and the other prisoners do not escape. By the end of the night, the jailer and his household have become believers. Paul and Silas are freed the next day.

All of this is important information to understand the context of Paul and his relationship with the followers of Christ who live in Philippi. He writes his letter not to strangers, but to those he knows and loves, fully aware of the opposition they face. In part, he writes this letter to offer further encouragement.

Paul feels comfortable enough to get personal. He encourages them to make his own joy complete. It sounds simple, but it is not. “. . . be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.” (Philippians 2:2 NRSV)

1. *How might Paul’s personal approach motivate the people of Philippi?*
2. *How difficult or simple is it to be of the same mind, love, and accord with others?*
3. *What are the roadblocks to unity?*

Paul pleads for maturity to reign. Followers of Christ are not to be concerned about their own self-interest, but regard others before themselves. Paul knows selfishness is a chief obstacle to the goal of a loving community. An attitude of humility is to be adopted by each follower of Christ.

4. *Describe a faith community which emulates humility.*
5. *Why is humility essential for a mature congregation?*

What follows in Philippians 2: 5-11 is one of the beloved hymns of the early church. Take a moment to slowly read aloud Philippians 2:5-11. If you are with others, try to read this section in unison.

6. *What phrases seem particularly significant to you?*
7. *Does this hymn summarize the faith? If not, what else would you add?*

When Paul describes the mind of Christ, he emphasizes the servant aspect of Christ. Although he is God, Jesus empties himself and lets go. (See Philippians 2:7) He lets go of any selfish desire or need to be right. He lets go of pride. He lets go of himself as the center of the world. He empties himself, allowing God’s will and love to fill him.

What a powerful image and approach to life, especially when we see this emptying leads to his death on the cross. In a moment, Jesus could have changed the outcome. Instead, Jesus humbled himself to the point of death.

8. *What does it mean for Jesus to have “emptied himself”?*
9. *If Jesus is willing to be humble and die on a cross, then why can’t we adopt a humble attitude?*

## **word among us**

By most standards Sam and Junior had nothing in common. One was married and the other was single. One was wealthy and the other not. One loved sports and the other did not. One was politically conservative, the other radically liberal.

And yet when it came to the church, there was a deep bond. They both loved Christ and looked out for each other's interest. Over the years, they created a system where they showed up after big church events to help with the final clean-up. They willingly took out the trash and swept floors together. Often Sam and Junior would be the last ones to leave a function, locking the doors behind them.

Rather than quarrel about their differences, Sam and Junior built a friendship on Christ. They encouraged one another and listened attentively to each other's joys and sorrows. Their humility and willingness to serve set a tone for their congregation.

1. *What can we learn from Sam and Junior?*
2. *What is the essential ingredient to the friendship between Sam and Junior?*

Sam and Junior appear to embody Paul's vision of followers of Christ described in Philippians 2:1-5. Paul writes ". . . be of the same mind, having the same love, being fully of the same accord and of the same mind." Nothing is done out of conceit or selfish ambition. The connection to Christ allows Sam and Junior to forge a friendship despite their differences.

3. *Take a moment to reflect someone in your life with whom you are deeply connected because of Jesus Christ. Describe that relationship.*
4. *Why do you suspect most of us don't have a longer list?*

Take a moment to name conflicts which sometimes occur within faith communities. Speak only in generalities.

5. *What tends to divide followers of Christ?*
6. *What would Paul advise?*

## **faith practice in daily life**

**Serve all people following the example of Jesus.**

We are stopped short in our tracks when we consider Jesus came to earth with the power of God, but came in human form taking on the role of a servant, humbling himself to death on the cross. Remembering the servant attitude of Jesus tends to put things in perspective.

7. *What changes occur in us as we remember how Jesus humbled himself and died on a cross?*
8. *How have you learned humility?*
9. *What do you hope to remember from this lesson?*

Paul understands the challenges of being a follower of Christ. He urges followers of Christ not to be at odds with each other, but to seek the same mind of Christ; for it is there we will find humility and a willingness to serve others.

### **Prayer**

Christ, give us the same mind, heart and spirit as you. Amen

### ***last word***

Each day this week, be intentional about looking after the interests of others.