

Text: Philippians 2:1-4 (NIV)

¹If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Theme: Faith in Christ Shapes our Attitude

We probably have all have heard of the 7 dwarfs from the Disney movie, “Snow White and the 7 Dwarfs.” Ever one of their names describe their character or their attitude. Bashful, Dopey, Sneezy, Happy, Grumpy, Doc, and Sleepy were given those names because that is how they are. It’s impossible to forget their names, because their attitude describes their name.

Imagine if we were named the same way. Someone was given the job of observing us, and then they gave us the name that best described us. What would people call you? What name would be given to our congregation?

We can call ourselves whatever we want; however, our actions and our attitudes often describe what kind of a congregation and what kind of christians we are. In Philippians 2 Paul gives us an attitude check, as he shows that faith in what Jesus has done for us shapes our attitude as Christians.

I. A faith-shaped attitude is like minded.

Paul writes in verse 2, “*Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.*” That is exactly how Jesus was. He was like-minded with His Father, even though it would mean that He would be obedient to death on a cross. He loved us so much that He gave up His glory in heaven, took our flesh upon Himself, suffered temptation and troubles, and then gave His innocent life as the payment for our sins. His entire life on earth centered on one purpose, to accomplish our salvation, despite the suffering that it brought to Him.

When we know Him as our Savior, that faith shapes our attitude to be like-minded. Being like-minded doesn’t mean that we just get along and that don’t quarrel. That’s apart of it. A congregation in which the people despise each other and are constantly quarreling with each other, isn’t like-minded. But being like-minded is more than that. It is having the same love and being one in spirit and purpose. If I were to ask, what is our purpose as a congregation, would we be like-minded or would we be a congregation of different agendas, each hoping that things are done the way that we want them to be? As we look at our lives as Christians, are we hoping to sway God that our lives go in the direction that we want or are we looking for God’s will in our lives. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, He didn’t want to go to the cross. Three times He prayed that the Father would take that cup of suffering from Him. But then He ended His prayer, “*Nevertheless, not My will, but Thy will be done.*” That is how our attitude as Christians should be. We pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy will be done.” In the *Small Catechism* Luther writes that in this petitions we are praying that God’s will is done to us and through us. About 9 years ago we passed a vision statement which says that we wish to be, “A fellowship of Christians, grounded in the Scriptures and centered on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.” When our vision is grounded in the Scriptures and centered on the Gospel

of Jesus Christ, then we will be like-minded. Everything we plan and do will be done that the faith of our members have in Christ will grow, and that the Gospel will spread to those around us. It will be our hope and our aim that God will be glorified among us and that Christ is proclaimed among us. When our thoughts and goals turn from what we want to what God wants, especially that all men are saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4), then we are like-minded and have the same attitude as Christ Jesus.

II. A Gospel-shaped attitude is humble.

Paul writes in verse 3, *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.”* Here it is easy to see how our attitude is shaped by faith in Jesus Christ. It was not selfish ambition that led Him to give up His glory in heaven and to suffer death on a cross. Paul writes in verse 8 that Christ humbled Himself. He did it in order to save us. As the Savior He has now been exalted to the highest place and given the name that is above all name, that at His name every knee shall bow. But the exaltation came after His humiliation.

Too often Christians are looking for exaltation on this earth. We want titles, honor, and praise bestowed on us. But Jesus said regarding the pharisees of His day, *“Everything they do is for men to see...They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them ‘Rabbi...’ Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”* (Mt. 23:5-7,12) In Philippians 1:17 Paul writes that there were people in Rome who were even preaching the Gospel out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, but supposing that they could stir up trouble for Paul while he was in prison. Paul calls us to Christ-like humility in which we honor one another more than ourselves. He pictures a marvelous fellowship in which no one is looked down upon, but everyone is looked up to. In such a fellowship each person recognizes their own weaknesses and shortcomings and looks for the good in other people. We honor one another and show respect toward one another. In that way the faith is shaping our attitude so that it is like that of Christ Jesus.

III. A Gospel-shaped attitude seeks the interest of one another.

Paul writes in verse 4, *“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* Here it is easy to see how this attitude is influenced by faith in Christ. He gave up His glory and bore His cross in our interest. His whole ministry centered on what He could do for us. Even when He was tired, He still healed the sick and preached the Gospel. Even as He suffered and had the power to come down from the cross, He remained and bore our sins. Jesus called His disciples to this same attitude on Maundy Thursday when He said, *“A new command I give you; Love one another. As I have love you, so you much love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”* (Jn 13:34) John writes in his first letter, *“We love because He first loved us.”* (1 Jn 4:19) Acts 2 describes the first congregation in Jerusalem as such a congregation. They people even sold their possessions to help their brothers and sisters in Christ who were in need. (Acts 2:45) It is tempting to get so wrapped up in what we want that we forget what other people need. But imagine a fellowship in which we are all looking out for the needs of each other. When we haven't seen someone in church for a couple of weeks, we wonder if there is something wrong and give them a call to see if there is something we can do. We encourage each other, and support each other in times of need. When we see people straying from our Lord and His

ways, we gently call them back. Such concern and love for one another is an attitude shaped by faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul begins this chapter by writing, *“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being...”* What He is saying that if you have been united with Christ, if His love has comforted you, if the Holy Spirit dwells in you, then your attitude will be shaped by the that faith. A faith-shaped attitude is like-minded, humble, and seeks the interest of one another. When people see a congregation with that kind of attitude, the word they will have to use to describe it is “Christ-like.” When people see us with that attitude, they will have to use the same word to describe us, “Christ-like.”

It is my hope and prayer, that as a congregation and as Christians, that it is our aim to have our attitude is shaped by our faith in Christ, that the word people use to describe us whill always show our faith in Christ as our Savior.

Amen.

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