

We are the World

Philippians 3:4-14

If anyone else has reason to put their confidence in physical advantages, I have even more:

⁵ I was circumcised on the eighth day.

I am from the people of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin.

I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

With respect to observing the Law, I'm a Pharisee.

⁶ With respect to devotion to the faith, I harassed the church.

With respect to righteousness under the Law, I'm blameless.

⁷ These things were my assets, but I wrote them off as a loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ But even beyond that, I consider everything a loss in comparison with the superior value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have lost everything for him, but what I lost I think of as sewer trash, so that I might gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him. In Christ I have a righteousness that is not my own and that does not come from the Law but rather from the faithfulness of Christ. It is the righteousness of God that is based on faith. ¹⁰ The righteousness that I have comes from knowing Christ, the power of his resurrection, and the participation in his sufferings. It includes being conformed to his death ¹¹ so that I may perhaps reach the goal of the resurrection of the dead.

¹² It's not that I have already reached this goal or have already been perfected, but I pursue it, so that I may grab hold of it because Christ grabbed hold of me for just this purpose. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I myself don't think I've reached it, but I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. ¹⁴ The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus.

At different times and for different reasons we have seen the parts of the world united. During the period of the World Wars – we saw groups form on both sides of the fight. In world war 2 – the Allied

Forces and the Axis Forces joined in the battle. We have also seen coalition of forces joined to fight at different times. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11 we saw the much of the world react and respond together.

But we have also seen people come together for issues and needs. For hurricane relief or tornado relief. And other disasters. And there have been other moments, but nothing like what we have experienced this year. A world where Covid-19 has affected people of all ages, nations, and races.

Isn't it sad and unfortunate that we tend to see the world united in times of trouble, war, or now, illness? Oh, there have been moments when some of the world rallied around a cause. One of those times that I remember was back in 1985. There was a great need for funding to help accomplish humanitarian relief around the United States as Africa – so Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie wrote a song. Then they got everyone who was anyone in the music business to come together to sing it. Some of you may remember the words – The first verse said, “There comes a time - when we heed a certain call - when the world

must come together as one. There are people dying. Oh, and it's time to lend a hand to life the greatest gift of all.”

Then the second verse said, “We can't go on pretending day-by-day that someone, somewhere soon make a change. We're all a part of God's great big family and the truth, you know, love is all we need.”

And of course the chorus that got stuck in our minds – “We are the world we are the children. We are the ones who make a brighter day, so let's start giving. There's a choice we're making We're saving our own lives it's true we'll make a better day, just you and me”

But while it's usually tragedy or need that pulls people together – the purpose of this day, **Worldwide Communion Sunday, is to remind us that EVERYDAY the church should be an example to the world of unity and love.**

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Church in Philippi – he tried to help us understand what this day is supposed to be about. In Philippians chapter 3 – beginning in verse 4 we hear Paul saying, “If anyone else has reason to put their confidence in physical advantages, I have even more: I was circumcised on the eighth day. I am from the people of Israel and

the tribe of Benjamin. I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews. With respect to observing the Law, I'm a Pharisee. With respect to devotion to the faith, I harassed the church. With respect to righteousness under the Law, I'm blameless."

Paul seems to think a lot of himself. And we might not blatantly brag like Paul – but what he's doing it what we all do. He is describing how he's a have and implying that others are have nots. He's in and others are out. He's right and others are wrong.

But then Paul says, "These things were my assets, but I wrote them off as a loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ But even beyond that, I consider everything a loss in comparison with the superior value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have lost everything for him, but what I lost I think of as sewer trash, so that I might gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him. In Christ I have a righteousness that is not my own and that does not come from the Law but rather from the faithfulness of Christ. It is the righteousness of God that is based on faith. ¹⁰ The righteousness that I have comes from knowing Christ, the power of his resurrection, and the

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Paul is saying that what family he was born into and what he had personally achieved aren't important – Or like the common English Bible translates it – they are sewer trash. What is important for him is important for you and me and for everyone everywhere – what is important is God's upward call in Christ Jesus. It is our relationship with Jesus. It is our life lived as his disciple.

That's why I love Worldwide Communion Sunday. This is a day for the have's and the have nots. For the weak and the strong. For us and for them. And it's the day that crosses all of those lines and reminds us that they aren't what's important.

In every nation of the world, in storefront churches and village centers, in country clapboard chapels and city cathedrals, in our churches, in our homes, wherever we may be - believers will receive the bread and wine, symbolizing the body and blood of Christ. And in some special, wonderful way, we are brought together in him.

For this moment, as **we ALL share and experience the sacrificial love of Christ** – we are not divided - longstanding arguments might be forgotten and longstanding grudges forgiven, because everyone of us – even if we are great and amazing like Paul – we are all unworthy guests of Jesus at his table and yet we are all welcomed and loved.

Whether you realize it or not, when you share in the Supper of the Lord, particularly on a Worldwide Communion Sunday, you are doing something radical. You are participating in and witnessing to the New Creation in Jesus Christ. Yes, this world is still torn apart by racial, social, economic, and political divisions.

But when we gather around this table – especially on this day – we are witnessing to our faith that one day one day we will all be one in Christ.

So today – think about where there is division in your life. How can you break down that wall? Where do you feel that who you are and what you have achieved raise you up above others? How can you use your blessings to bless others? Where can you live in our world – like you are living in the Kingdom – knowing that the people you meet are loved by the same Jesus who loves you?