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In Full Accord

Pressing On

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, YEAR A

How do we press on together? What does it take to live well as a community?

REFERENCES

Exodus 17:1-7

Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16

Philippians 2:1-13

Matthew 21:23-32

COLORS

Green

Preaching Notes

Focus Text: **Philippians 2:1-13**

Paul seems very concerned about thinking—maybe because he is in prison and doesn't have much else to do but think. In the first few verses of this passage, he tells us that we should think alike and think as Christ does. Right? Well, sort of. "Being of the same mind" doesn't stifle creativity or even differences of opinion. He is not trying to remove all the differences in the body of Christ. Those differences make us the rich tapestry we are. Finding new perspectives, new ways of looking at the same things, is part of the excitement of living in community.

So, what does he mean by "having the same mind"? How can a diverse collection of humanity—like the church—ever hope to achieve unanimity of thought? We are too different, have too many

varied experiences and backgrounds, and too many diverse abilities to hope to think alike on any issue of substance. Don't you think?

Paul has a solution. Wake up in the morning with your mind stayed on Christ. Do you know that spiritual? The first line goes "Woke up this mornin' with my mind..." (*The Faith We Sing*, 2082). Stop there for a moment. Woke up with my mind? Well, good for you! We were wondering. The song doesn't say much about yesterday, or tomorrow, for that matter. You wonder, "It's a good thing, don't you think, to wake up with your mind?" (Especially considering the alternative.)

However, this isn't a hymn about mental health. It is an invitation to think as Christ does. The song, while it pauses at the end of the first line, goes on to make a very profound statement: "Woke up this mornin with my mind ... and it was stayed on Jesus." Some versions simply say, "with my mind stayin' on Jesus. "

It's an early morning act of faith. It is claiming Christ first thing. It is claiming that living the day that lies ahead in the way we say we want to live is possible only by focusing on the mind of Christ. That is exactly what Paul says in our text from Philippians this week.

He wants us to think as Christ does. The thought process he is particularly interested in is humility: "set yourself aside." Set aside your need to be right. Set aside your need to have it your way. Set aside ... Wouldn't it be wonderful if those who claimed to be followers of Christ—in business, in politics, in the church—would set their minds on Christ and embrace humility, self-sacrifice, and a desire for unity and hope?

Some do, I know. But most don't, or most of us don't all the time. That's why we need daily reminders. "Woke up THIS morning..."

The "same mind" doesn't mean the same thoughts, but the same goals. It means that love always trumps prejudice. It means that sacrifice always wins over selfishness. It means giving always triumphs over hoarding. It means ... well, you get the idea. How we go about becoming more like Christ, having that mind of Christ, may be different, as each of us is different. But we all seek the same Christ, the same kingdom, the same hope. This is what being in full accord means. It means thinking, acting, and being as much like Christ as we can day by day. It means choosing again and again to have a mind "stayed" on Jesus.

That is what causes Paul to break into song in the last verses of the passage. He hopes that one day we won't have to wonder what Jesus would do, because we would all be doing it, not because we

were forced or coerced, but because it was what we all wanted to do. It was the natural response to any situation— the loving response, the caring and giving response, the Christlike response.

“Woke up this morning with my mind stayed on Jesus.” At least, that’s my hope. How about you?

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