

A Name Above all Names.
Philippians 2

Congregation: Isaiah 45:22-25

Colossians 1:15-24

Ephesians 1:3-14

When we were last here in Philippians we started out here in chapter 2. In the beginning of chapter 2 it becomes apparent that one of the main reasons that Paul is writing this letter is to encourage, and instruct the Philippians church to strive for the gospel together in unity. To not be at odds with each other, to not be bickering and arguing over things of little importance but instead to have their hearts and minds focused on Christ and the ministry that they have been giving toward each other and all of those around them.

Last week Josh preached to us out of the book of Jonah, and it was interesting going through it the way we did, taking the entire book in one chunk and getting an overarching view. One thing that stood out to me, and I am sure to you as well was that Jonah really was not a nice guy. Though he may have been a prophet, his attitude and ministry is far from what we see as examples here in the new testament. Jonah was a Hebrew, a Jew and with that I am sure came the pride of being one of God's chosen people, so when he was told that he must go to Nineveh to declare God's judgment upon them it isn't hard to see why he would really not care. Why should God be concerned about those who are not his people?

I think this really shows a stark difference between the old and new covenant ministry. The old covenant and laws purpose was to bring despair, to drive those who must abide by them to an understanding that it is impossible for them to please God through their actions, yet what it produced was arrogance, and pride among the Jews. What God was calling Jonah to do, was no different then what he calls each and every one of us to do. We are to stand as a witness, we are to go and teach, and we are to warn of the judgment of sin to those who are outside, to those who are not of the family of God.

Jonah stands as an example for each and every one of us. Just as God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn them of God's coming wrath upon them so that they may repent and turn from their destructive ways. We who are God's adopted children, his chosen people, our mission, our goal, and our purpose is to reach out to those who are heading toward destruction and to do the very same. But we do not come with just a warning of judgment but also a plea for repentance and the good news of the gospel.

I was just thinking upon this, this week about the stark differences between Jonah, and the gospel outreach we read about in the new testament. The law has not changed, God has not changed, but the revelation and understanding given to use by the indwelling of the holy spirit and the ministry and life of Christ allows us to understand much more fully God's word, and the call of scripture to repentance. This side of the cross, we have Christ's teaching, and the teaching of the apostles, and the indwelling of the holy spirit to help us understand these things. Jonah did not, he had the words that God gave him, and the command as to what to do. Yet he did not fully understand the reason and purpose behind the Jewish old covenant laws that he was following. As we have learned, to love the your neighbor as yourself is the chief law, it is on this law that all other laws hang.

So as Josh took us through the book of Jonah last week that is one thing that stood out to me. Jonah eventually made it to Nineveh, he walked through the city declaring what God told him to declare, then he sat and waited for its destruction. Then was annoyed that these gentiles were not destroyed and that God had spared them. Jonah was a Hebrew, a Jew, a prophet of God under the law and he had no love for these people.

Yet despite his arrogance, and pride. Despite the fact that his heart was not in the right place, and he was waiting to witness God's destruction of Nineveh, God used him in a mighty and powerful way. As Josh said last week, no matter where Jonah went, no matter what Jonah did, he left in his wake a whole lot of people who believed upon God.

When thinking of Jonah's ministry to the Ninevites I am reminded of Paul when he says here in verse 15 of the first chapter. "Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill; The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the later out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice."

Jonah was God's man, he was God's prophet and God sent him to preach to the gentiles in Nineveh, to go and preach to the enemies of Israel. When Jonah finally went, and told them the message that God had for them, it is clear that Jonah's intention was not that born of love and concern for these people, but rather he was hoping to add affliction upon them. Hoping for their destruction. Yet despite Jonah's probably intention, God's words were given, and God's intended purpose and plan fulfilled and they turned, and repented and God spared them.

I have been rather harsh on poor Jonah today, and I think he stands as an example to us in many ways of how we are not to be. But not only that, his account also stands as proof of God's sovereignty and grace, and how his purpose and plan will be fulfilled despite ourselves. When God told Moses to go and tell Pharaoh to let his people go, Moses said he wasn't smart enough, he couldn't talk well enough, send someone else. Yet despite what he saw as shortcomings God surpassed them and used Moses for his purpose. Or Balaam, who despite the fact he was sent to curse Israel God used him to bless them instead. And despite Jonah's rebellion, and hatred toward the Ninevites God used him for his purpose and plan.

I find in this great encouragement, for despite ourselves, our sin, our perceived shortcomings, our rebellion, our lack of faith, God still uses us to accomplish his purpose, we are still his tools to be used in his ministry as he sees fit. So we should not worry ourselves and make excuses but rather be willing and open to God's calling to do the ministry that he has called each of us to.

Now we come back to our passages here in Philippians, and juxtapose it to Jonah. Here we see Paul exhorting the Philippians to love one another, to love those around them, to stand together in love and unity for the gospel of Christ. This unity that we are to have as Christians stands as a witness itself to the love of God that we claim. That is why this unity in the gospel is so important, that is why it is so important to show love toward each other, and toward others because it stands as a witness to the love that God shows toward us.

In review let us read the first few verses of the 2nd chapter here, actually, let's start in verse 29 of chapter 1. I do not see a reason to spend a whole lot of time here reviewing and going over what we talked about 2 weeks ago for I feel it is pretty straightforward here in scripture. It is the same message

we saw in Galatians, the same we saw in James, and the same we saw in 1st John. To have the mind of Christ, to live our lives worthy of the gospel we claim, to live a life marked with love and sacrifice, to be merciful, gracious and kind. Not seeking out own selfish ambitions but rather watching for the needs of others as Christ gave his life for us.

So let us look this morning continuing on here in the 2nd chapter. We ended at verse 8 last time, but we see here in verse 9 that word Therefor again that Paul loves to use so much...so let us go back again and read starting in verse 5 to get the full context of this passage.

So I was trying to make sense and get a full understanding of verse 5-7 here, and I think it is actually quite clumsily written and difficult to understand in the New King James. What does he mean did not consider it robbery to be equal with God? Well I think we can get a clear understanding to this by just simply reading this text from the ESV. “ Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for his own advantage. Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men. And when he had come as a man in his external form, he humbled himself be becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death on the cross.”

I think it is very important to get a clear understanding of this passage here because Paul is calling his readers to have this mind in us, this same mind of Christ, to make our attitude like that of our savior. Christ humbled himself, emptied himself, came in the flesh and gave of his life, even to the death of the cross so that the price of sin on our heads maybe paid. This is not a Jonah type ministry, Christ did not come merely claiming God's judgment upon sin, and then sit back and wait for God to pour his wrath upon the earth. No he came, and died in the place of his people, paying the price himself for their sins and rebellion against God so that we may be reconciled to God as children, and heirs to his kingdom.

This is the very thing that Paul is calling his reader to, our motivation for the gospel, our drive for the ministry isn't so we can sit around the fires of hell and makes s'mores over the burning souls of the lost, but rather our motivation is to save the lost from the fires of hell. The great commission that we have been given does not say, go forth and cast judgment on all those who sin, puffing yourself up in pride and arrogance waiting for that day of judgment. We are to go as Christ as gone, we are to have the attitude of Christ, and go forth and make disciples of all nations, to baptize them, and instruct to them to obey God.

Also this passage here, teaches an important truth. The same truth that John wrote about in his Letter we went through. The importance of the incarnation, of God becoming man. The fact that God had to become like us just shows how desperate and bad our condition toward him is. He had to become one of us, to save us, emptying himself and assuming the form of man. I read something interesting this week at how Christ taking the form of man alludes to Adam. Jesus has 2 natures in one person, he already had the form of God, and he put on the form of man, and then we have Adam, who was in the form of man, but sought equality with God for selfish reasons. Adam was grasping to be like God, yet Jesus who was equal to God, did not hang on to that right, he did not use it for himself, but gave it up, emptied himself for the sake of others.

In verse 8 here, Paul says, that Christ being found in the appearance of man, humbled himself even to the death of the cross. This death on the cross was the ultimate humiliation of the 1st century. It was reserved only for those who were insurrectionists, or unmanageable slaves. The Roman

philosopher Cicero described crucifixion as “a most cruel and disgusting punishment, that the very mention of it should be far removed not only from a Roman citizens body, but from his mind, his eyes and his ears.”

Today the cross has become nothing more then a symbol, It has become something that we wear with pride, either on our jewelry, our t shirts, or tattoos. Sometimes I feel that there is a sense that the significance of the cross has been lost and it has rather just become not much more then advertising a name brand shirt. The cross in the day of Christ was not a name brand symbol of Christians, it was a something to be feared, it was something that was reserved for those deserving the most cruel, punishment, it was reserved for those that Rome would set forth as an example as to why you do not mess with Rome.

Those who were put to death in this way suffered sometimes for days before finally dying. They were beaten, flogged, hung naked. They would pull themselves up for breath, alternating between agonizing pain in their spiked feet and agonizing pain in their spiked hands, as their muscles cramped and searing pain shot through their lacerated back moving up and down against the rough timber. They would experience extreme blood loss, dehydration, lack of oxygen, increased carbon dioxide causing acidic conditions in their tissues until fluid would build up in their lungs and they could no longer breathe ultimately dying of suffocation.

This is the death that our savior died, for us, for our sins so that we may be reconciled to the father. Blake White writes a rather vivid image of the cross, and the humility and death that Christ suffered on our behalf. He writes, “ The Son of God humbled himself. He, who sustains all things by the word of His power was grabbed with Roman hands that He formed. He humbled Himself. He was spat upon by the saliva glands that he made. He Humbled Himself, He was nailed with metal He made, by hands He made , to a cross cut from a tree that He spoke into existence. He humbled Himself. Though he could have summoned an army of angels to destroy His crucifiers, He stayed there, naked and writhing. He humbled himself.

But we know that isn't where it ends, it did not end with Christs death on the cross. Look at verse 9, “Therefor God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name.” Paul says for this very reason Christ is exalted. Because he came as a man, because he was obedient to his father even to the death of the cross, suffering in the most horrendous way, dying as a criminal, He is exalted.

This is the pattern set forth for the Christian faith. Suffering, then glory, power in weakness, victory through defeat. Christ, in his suffering and death rose victorious over sin, satan, and the grave. Accomplishing the very thing he came to do. All those who sought to silence him, all those who screamed crucify him, thought that they were putting to death a blasphemer, but it was the very Son of God. And in a way that only the sovereign Lord of all could orchestrate, the very thing that caused rejoicing in them for Jesus was defeated, he was dead, was the very thing he came to do to accomplish salvation, and reconciliation for the lost world.

Because of this, God has given him a name above all names, One day, every one will bow before Him and confess his lordship. This does not mean that there will be universal salvation to all those who see him in those last days, but rather there will be universal confession to who Jesus truly is. Either we repent and confess him by faith as Lord now, or we will confess him in shame and terror in the last day, but either way, every knee shall bow, and every mouth confess that Jesus is Lord.

We live in a world with relative truth, there is no such thing as abject truth, only what you believe. And what you believe maybe different then what I believe but that doesn't make anyone wrong we are both right because it is true for ourselves. But this here is not a relative truth, this is not a truth because I believe it to be, this is a truth because God said it will be.

Believe it or not, makes no difference on whether it is true or not. Christ shall return, everyone will see him, no one will escape the judgment except those who are covered by the blood of Christ. Not because of what they have done, or even what they believe but because of Christ work on the cross applied to their soul, his death, the punishment he took for us, laid to our account so that we may be found justified in the eyes of God. What a glorious, and awful day that will be, for some a day of rejoicing and praising our savior, and for others a day of great sorrow, anguish, and suffering. Just as the day of Christs crucifixion. What an awful day, the Son of God dying a most humiliating and awful death, but it was on that day, because of that very death that his name is exalted above all names, it is because of that death that we are reconciled to him, it is because of that death that we can stand before God, as John said in 1st John, "When he appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at his coming." What a glorious, and awful day of the Lord that will be. What a glorious day that will be.