

Series: The Ideal Church is a Joyful Church

Today's Message: The Joyful Church is an Ideal Church; Philippians 1:1-8

The ideal Church is a joyful Church. An ideal church doesn't just happen. It takes commitment to **the first thing**, which is to **keep the Main One the main thing**.

Imagine building your dream home. If you have ever built anything, you know that the project always will encounter snags. Probably a lot of negotiating with the architects, builders, contractors and even with your main partner, your spouse. The stress of the hitting deadlines and meeting schedules can be unbearable. Working relationships can be strained. Finances stretched beyond breaking. Even your marriage is tested. But what keeps the project alive is the dream, or the ideal. It is often when the original vision is revisited and the family regroups, and they rally around the dream that there is renewed commitment to see the dream come true.

I've called today "Unity Sunday." It is a call for us to regroup as a church and rally around our common bond in the Spirit which is Christ Jesus. I want us to remember that Christ is our all in all! I want us to remember that to be the Church that pleases God we will need to renew our commitment to love, mercy, humility, compassion, and accountability before our Lord Jesus Christ!

I want us to go to Philippi and revisit perhaps the one church that brought Paul the most joy. I want us to rediscover what motivated Paul. It wasn't the size of the church (maybe 30). It wasn't the wealth of the members of the church (they were in poverty). No! It was their love for the Lord Jesus Christ and for one another that made this church the ideal church. A church marked with joy, compassion, mercy, grace and accountability before the Lord Jesus Christ.

- I) The Birth of the Church in Philippi: Acts 16
 - A) It began with three converts along with some family members (16:15, 33).
 - 1) Lydia: wealthy (16:11-15)
 - 2) Presumably a slave girl (16:16-18)
 - 3) A jailer: not the most esteemed position in society (16:19-34)
 - B) Background: Philippians is called the epistle of joy. "Joy" (16x); Jesus is the reason for the joy! His name and titles are used by Paul 40x in the letter, 17x in chapter 1.
 - 1) You can begin to see where Paul's mind was located as an apostle! Right! His mind was IN CHRIST!
 - (a) His joy was in the Lord in spite of the fact that:
 - (i) That he suffered greatly in Philippi at its founding.
 - (ii) That he wrote to the Philippian church from a Roman prison.
 - (iii) And though he was not present to see their godly behavior and joy in the Lord he had heard of their joyful obedience to the gospel.
- II) True Fellowship: Bonded Together in Christ
 - A) 1:1-2 Important bond and common yoke
 - 1) Bonded to Christ as His servants in body, mind and spirit.
 - 2) Bonded to the people of God in the Philippi and the leaders of the Church.
 - 3) Yoked together by the grace and peace of God the Father AND the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - B) 1:3-5 Unity and "one-mindedness".
 - 1) **NOTE: Paul is thankful for all of them. ALL!**
 - (a) His mind is joined with Christ and Paul is thankful to God for each believer in Philippi.
 - (i) Every believer was at a different place in their maturity. YET he's thankful for ALL!
 - 2) Every time he remembers them he was thankful for them!
 - (a) Who brings you joy when you think of them? What is your attitude toward ALL in this Body?
 - 3) He's thankful b/c their lives reflect Christ in their love for Paul by their generous gifts (2 Cor. 8:2-4), obedience (2:12-18), prayers (1:18), and like-mindedness (2:2)
 - 4) They were his friends! **Our friendships are always based on something. It is what bonds us.**

- (a) **Friendships: These believers are bonded together with Paul IN CHRIST!**
 - (i) How important is Christ in your relationships with others in this church?
 - (ii) Do your conversations, your fellowship reflect that importance?
 - C) (1:6-7) The right way to see fellow believers in this church. Have this mind in you, which is in Christ...
 - 1) "...being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."
 - (a) What God has started He will finish (**Rom. 8:32; John 10:27-29**)
 - (b) **God sees us as complete: (Rom. 8:29-30)**
 - (c) **But He also governs our growth and maturity (1:6)**
 - 2) Rather than "judge" them, Paul loves and cherishes them!
 - (a) "It is right for me to feel this way about you...**all of you share in God's grace with me!**"
 - (i) Regardless of their maturity, quirks, differences: They are first of all "sharers in God's grace!"
 - (a) Therefore, Paul knows EVEN IF HE CAN'T SEE IT!
 - (b) This love motivates him to look past failures and encourage them to greater maturity!
 - (i) **Look at the word, "any" in 2:1.**
 - (a) "**any**" provides a wide range for people with a wide range of differing knowledge in Christ.
 - (ii) **2:2: with a wide range of maturity "STRIVE TO BE LIKE MINDED"**
 - (a) **YOU HAVE THE SAME LOVE AND SAME SPIRIT!**
 - 1. **!!! There is NO Excuse to allow irritations to SEPARATE US!!**
 - a. Eph. 4:2-3: "Be completely humble and gentle, be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make EVERY EFFORT to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."
 - i. Like a fellow Christian or not, keep your mind like Christ.
 - ii. Remember your common bond.
 - iii. For the sake of the gospel, be willing to work through your differences.
- D) (1:8) The Right longing
 - 1) So, how did Paul truly long for these believers with such affection?
 - (a) Because it is an affection that originates in the mind of Christ!
 - (i) And the Holy Spirit will supply if you are growing in like-mindedness with Christ.
- III) Achieving the dream of becoming a joyful church, an ideal church.
 - A) Strive to be a **skilled** builder. Join with Christ Jesus in building up fellow Christians
 - 1) Turn to **Ephesians 4:29**
 - (a) "unwholesome talk": originates from the spiritual bowels, like vomit from a sick stomach.
 - (b) "helpful for building up" constructive, encouraging, pleasant, grace filled words originating from a mind controlled by the Spirit!
 - 2) **A skilled builder knows what disrupts unity and cooperation: Ephesians 4:31:**
 - (a) Things to get rid of:
 - (i) **Bitterness** (a soured opinion of a fellow believer. "The only part of me that hurts is that part of me that has not yet died." Bitterness is in you and is your problem, not the other persons.)
 - (ii) **rage** (explosive expression) and **anger** (smoldering resentment),
 - (iii) **brawling** (looking for trouble) and **slander** (looking to justify yourself by discrediting the reputation of someone else).
 - (iv) along with every form of malice (wishing or desiring hurt, frustration, pain on someone).
 - 3) **A skilled builder keeps the Main One the main thing: Ephesians 4:32:**
 - (a) REMEMBER YOUR COMMON ROOT, which is the grace of God in Christ!
 - (b) Be abounding in your willingness be kind and compassionate...forgiving just as... God in Christ...
 - B) A skilled builder calms quarrels.
 - 1) Prov. 15:18: A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but a patient person calms a quarrel.
- IV) Conclusion: Each one of us has a responsibility to keep the unity of the faith in Christ. Each of us, according to Paul in Phil. 2:2 and 2:5, must be responsible to seek like-mindedness with Christ Jesus and one another. If we do that we will be a joyful church, an ideal church; Even shining bright as stars in the darkness around us.