



Westminster
Presbyterian Church
NACOGDOCHES, TEXAS

The Mind of Christ
Philippians 2:1-11

World Communion Sunday may seem a little odd to many of us, for we just do things a little differently today. I can already hear the conversations following worship in the parking lot: “You know the worship went a little long today. Didn’t Steve know the Cowboys had a noon start?” “Well, I know it was a little long, but the service was well thought-out and attempted to express the diversity of the Universal Church.” “The sermon was wonderful--I mean it was short; and it was great to see Jennifer take part in the Communion liturgy.” “I always enjoy hearing the Lord’s Prayer in different languages.” “And did you notice all the bread and all the color on the table, and how it represented church throughout the world?” “I think the best part of World Communion is singing all the hymns and responses that come from other countries. I noticed we sang hymns and responses from the UK, Ghana, Argentina, Spain, Korea, Sweden, Brazil, Jamaica, Swaziland, and even from the good old USA.” “The response from Sweden was a little weird since we also sang it in Spanish.”

Well, I can at least hope this is the parking lot conversation today following the Lord’s Day worship when we celebrate the diversity of the church.

Jesus told his disciples to go into all the world and we have. So, today, the church proclaims the wonder and glory of Jesus in a vast array of cultures. Even within our own city, our Lord Jesus is worshipped in various ways, and we cannot say we do it right and they do it wrong. We are simply different. But sometimes we are affected by our cultural likes and dislikes, and by the way we were brought up.

Throughout the world there are preachers in polo shirts and shorts, preachers wearing cowboy hats and bibbed overalls, preachers dressed in suits or dresses, preachers wearing a simple academic gown, and preachers dressed in ornate robes. Throughout the world there are drums beating, people dancing, congregations shouting, preachers proclaiming, organs blowing, bells ringing, churches clapping, tambourines shaking, processions marching, voices singing in almost every language. Some voices are quiet, some loud, some somber, some joyful, some are

difficult to understand, but all praising God who makes himself known in Jesus Christ. As the final verse of the Psalms, that is Psalm 150:6, commands: **“Let everything that breathes praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!”**

The church during Paul’s day was quite diverse, but not as diverse as we are today. The church has spread into many more cultures than in Paul’s day. But like today there were poor Christians, rich Christians and middle-class Christians. There were royal Christians, peasant Christians and merchant Christians. There were Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. There were Greek Christians, Roman Christians, African Christians, Asian Christian and Persian Christians.

And Paul wrote in Philippians 2:1-2: **“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.”**

Oh, Christians are richly different, but from reading Paul, it sounds to me like in the midst of our diversity, we have to understand that we are one church seeking to follow Jesus Christ. It sounds impossible. How can such a diverse faith claim to be one? Well, Paul had a solution that is basic for Christian unity. We cannot, we will not be able to proclaim the wonder of God’s love for everyone unless we are willing to look past our interests, our cultural sensitivities, and seek unity above all else.

Paul continued in verses 3-4: **“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.**

⁵In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

It is basic to our faith. It is absolutely necessary for Christian unity. It is vital if we are to be effective witnesses to the love of Christ to take the word “mine” out of our vocabulary. “What is mine is mine. I don’t care who needs it—it’s mine.” “I know my rights, and I will not give them up for anybody.”

Then we look to heaven to see the one who in very nature is God –Jesus Christ. The earth, and all its beauty and resources are his, for he made it, along with the sun, the moon and the stars. And for you and for me, and for this diverse thing we call the church, Christ willingly gave up what was his. He gave up his divine rights and became a human being. The omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent second person of the Trinity, Christ, was fully God and has now put on skin. He must use doors, ride animals, eat and sleep. He rubs shoulders with creatures--people he created. And what do these people do? They say, “Get out of my way Jew-boy.” “Move it, buddy.” “Who do you think you are, Jesus, somebody special?” “Well, you're not." Can you begin to glimpse what one writer calls the violence of the incarnation?

In becoming a person, Jesus came as a servant, and then he gave his life on the cross for the world. By nature, or afflicted with human DNA and survival instincts, we work to progress, to get more, to achieve security. Christ’s example is to give up everything, a downward spiral, from holding all the prerogatives of divinity and becoming a human who gave his life. Now what is my only hope? What is my only security? Jesus Christ. What is truly mine? Only Christ.

This past Wednesday several of us were privileged to hear about Erin Taylor’s mission trip to Romania. When she and the rest of the group arrived they went to an Orthodox Church and the priest prayed that God would bless their work. I thought about how big the world is, and of all the people who do not know Jesus Christ, and about all those who suffer, and then I thought about the church. I found it to be good news that though the church is most diverse, the church is working throughout the world making Christ and his love known. Even in our diversity, the church is at its best, when we follow the example of Christ who gave up heavenly glory to serve others. May we put away our self interests and concern ourselves with the interest and needs of others in Christ’s name. And on this World Communion Sunday we join the diverse and glorious universal church confessing with every tongue in every nation that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Amen.