

Gospel-Shaped Mindset

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. It's good to be with you all. I just want to say if Eli is old and uncool, then what am I doing here? But we're thankful for Eli and his ministry. Praise the Lord for that.

In her book, in Kelly Monroe Kulberg's book, *Finding God Beyond Harvard*, she tells the story of the beginning of Veritas and the movement that became something that did ministry across college campuses. But the story she tells is not merely a story of an institution or a ministry beginning. She tells a story of a beautiful community. She tells a story about how she arrived from Ohio at the Harvard Divinity School and saw in that divinity school a barrenness of soul, of life, of beauty. But then she came across this group of believers in Cambridge who loved life. And in the halls of academia, they played and they prayed. They loved one another and they loved the city and they loved the world. They cared and they shared in all that they did.

I went back and reread some of the story this week. And again, it moved my heart by the beauty of what she described as a Christian community that truly loved one another. I wonder if you've experienced a community like that. I know, I've been around long enough to know it's not easy to have a community like that.

It's so easy for conflicts to happen. It's so easy for gossip and slander to poison our relationships. It's so easy for envy to undermine our love for one another. And it's so hard to work through difficult things, to mend broken relationships, and to love well. I'm thankful that at the church here at Trinity, this is not a huge issue that I see. I don't feel like I come in every Sunday wondering what people are whispering about one another behind the pillars in the sanctuary. And I'm thankful for that. And yet, we have much to grow in still in this area.

And this brings us to the church in Philippi as well, because the church in Philippi was similar. It was not in crisis. It was not falling apart. And yet, we see hints of divisions. We see in Acts, or in verse 21, I'm sorry, verse chapter 1, there we go, chapter 1, verses 28 and 29, that there are opponents in conflict with outsiders. We see further on in chapter 2, verse 14, that Paul is talking about grumbling and complaining within the community. And we see in chapter 4, that there are two sisters, Euodia and Syntyche, who are not agreeing with one another. So we see these little hints. And Paul's saying, I want you to be on your guard. And I want to encourage you to be a community that is better than that.

[3 : 2 3] Maybe you've experienced more dysfunction and disunity in church, and it's been painful. Or maybe you've seen, or at least tasted, or sensed a whiff of the kind of beauty that the kingdom of God and the people of God can have for one another, and you long for it. Well, this morning, Paul, in our passage in Philippians chapter 2, is going to help us see, one, what that community looks like, and two, how we get it. These are the questions that Paul's going to be wrestling with as he talks, as he works through this passage this morning. He calls us to this kind of community.

So let's turn to Philippians 2, verses 1 through 11. This is a very famous passage. You may have heard it read a lot. I want to see that as Paul is coming to this passage in particular, you see Paul marrying his pastor hat and his theologian hat. The first half is very pastoral, very practical.

This is how we ought to live as believers. The second half is very deep and very theological. And so Nick and I decided we're going to preach this passage twice. So today I'm going to preach it, emphasizing the first half, and put on the pastoral hat. And next week, Nick's going to come back, and he's going to put on a theologian hat. But we're going to preach this same thing. It still has one point.

It's just we're going to look at emphases. There's too much to say in one sermon. So we're going to preach it twice so you can enjoy the next two weeks as we look at it. And as we look at this passage, I just want to say the chapter break is unfortunate, because this command that we see in the beginning of chapter 2 builds on what Paul has just said at the end of chapter 1. That is, we are to live as citizens of the gospel. That is, lives worthy of the good news of Jesus Christ. And the question is, how do we do that? And he's building on that and giving specificity to how we do that in this passage. And so that's what we're looking at this morning. Philippians chapter 2. Let's read it together, and then we'll pray.

So, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

[6 : 23] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed upon him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Father, we pray with me. Lord, as we look at this glorious passage this morning, will you open our hearts, will you enliven our minds, and Lord, will you take hold of our wills so that we might love you, so that we might know you, so that we might obey you more. Be my help this morning, I pray, that I might speak the words you would have me speak, that we would sit together under the commands of your word this morning. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So in this passage, Paul is giving us, this is the big idea. He's saying, I want you, believers, part of God's family, to have a gospel-shaped mindset in the church, characterized by unity and an orientation towards others that displays the person of Christ among us. The key verse in it is verse 5, in many ways.

Have this mind among you, which is also yours in Christ Jesus. And mind here is a very rich word. It's used throughout this book in lots of ways. It's what he says in chapter 1, verse 7, where he says, it is right for me to feel this way about you. And what he means there is, this is my stance. This is my disposition. This is my fundamental place from which I view and relate to you as someone else.

It's used again in verse 2 twice. In chapter 3, verse 15, Paul uses it to say, this is how you think about something. In verse 19 of chapter 3, it's something that you set your mind on. In chapter 4, verse 2, it's how, it's the encouragement for these two women to agree or to have a shared mind together about something. So it's a rich word that fundamentally has to do with our stance. It's the lens through which we view and relate to other people. And Paul says, we are called as God's people to have a mind of unity and a mind that orients towards others more than ourselves. So let's look at those things in order.

In verse 1 and 2, Paul says, have a mind of unity among. Verse 1 begins with an if, and that's not a conditional if, like if these things are true, but more of an assumption. Since these things are true, since these things are true, and what is it? Since we have encouragement from Christ, since we have love, since we have a participation in the Spirit, and lots of people fill in the Father in the middle of that and say, since we have participation in the life of the Trinity, the comfort of Christ, the love of the Father, and the participation in the Spirit, then let us have, and since we have affection and sympathy, that God has bound us together in family, where we have this deep connectedness, and this, we're meant to have this love for one another. Since we have these things, then verse 2, he says, let us have unity together. And it's interesting, because he says, as a pastor, he's saying, make my joy complete. Here's Paul sitting in prison, and he says, make my joy complete by knowing that you guys are pursuing this kind of unity together. Verse 2, look at it. There's a rhetorical building on this. It is the same mind. It is the same love, being of full accord and of one mind. Full accord is this word that pictures souls that are bound together with one another, like a family. And this is Paul's central exhortation here in verses 1 and 2, is have unity with one another. Now look, unity is not an easy thing in our world today, right? Let me say some things that it does not mean. It does not mean we become robots and we stop thinking. It does not mean that doctrinal issues don't matter. Look ahead to chapter 3 in the first couple of verses, and you'll see that there's, there are people out there that Paul is going to strongly repudiate. These people are preaching a different gospel that's trusting in their own works rather than in the work of Christ. And so there are central gospel truths that are worth dividing over. He condemns that those who deny that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And yet we have to realize, given those caveats, that there are ways for us to navigate these things. Here at Trinity, we often talk about primary and secondary doctrines. There are primary doctrines. If you don't believe Jesus was God, you can't have fellowship with one another as believers. And that's a primary doctrine. But there are lots of secondary doctrines as well.

[12:09] And then the essentials, the work of Christ, the person of Christ, the nature of God, we must be in unity of thought. But there are also things where we may have diversity of thought. How we practice baptism.

How we organize our church. How we practice communion. And there are some places where you have really divergent beliefs, even within the church. How we believe what's going to happen at the end of time.

Or what kind of worship music we have. Or what color is the rug. We can have all sorts of different things that are truly just... that range all the way from deep convictions to just opinions.

There's a great old phrase that's quoted. It's referred to as coming from a couple of different people. In essentials, unity. In non-essentials, liberty. In all things, charity.

Unity. And Paul says we're called to have a unity to live out this life that God has called us to together.

[13:14] But I'm afraid that in our world today, there are external forces and internal impulses that may be pulling apart our unity. We need to be careful and be aware of these pressures.

I'm going to give you an example of how I see some of the pulls of disunity working out in the church today. And then hopefully you can make some application to some other areas.

So for instance, here's an example of a place. With regard to the issue of abortion, right? Christians believe that life begins at conception.

We believe that God is the author of life. We believe that God has called us to be protectors and preservers of life in every way that we can.

This is a good and right thing. And this is true of the church everywhere. But the practice of how we apply that principle, the practice of how we carry that out, could vary widely.

[14 : 19] Some may lobby to change the laws of the land to prevent this practice from happening. Some may protest publicly seeking to bring social pressure to end this practice.

Some may serve quietly in a crisis pregnancy center, providing alternatives to women who would be considering this direction. Some would simply in their prayer closet at home devote themselves regularly to the prayer that God would work to change our world and our society.

Some may enter into ethics and study so that they can teach the next generation to think about life from a Christian perspective in the way God would have us.

And friends, what I see today is that in the world, people who hold different practices along this spectrum, within the church, are sniping and fighting and criticizing and even condemning one another for not being as serious about how they go about living out this principle.

We might celebrate the diversity of how God is working through us to address this. But instead, we criticize, undermine, doubt, and condemn.

[15 : 35] Friends, we need to recognize the dangers that are out there of pulling us apart. And how many other issues could we say this about? Parenting practices, political parties, school choices, responses to racism, pandemics, masks, and so forth.

We could keep going and see how easy it is for us to polarize. But Paul says we are to unify about this.

One of the commentators of the 19th century, Cranfield, wrote this about the unity that Paul is calling us to. Such unity will only come when Christians are humble and bold enough to lay hold on the unity already given in Christ and to take it more seriously than their own self-importance.

Do you hear what he's saying?

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[16 : 54] Where we find other brothers and sisters that we disagree with, that we find difficult to swallow. Rather than seeing that as an opportunity to divide and separate, let us come together.

Let us seek to understand. Brother, sister, why would you say that? Help me understand charitably to understand why you would believe what you believe and practice what you practice.

Secondly, extend grace rather than judgment as you seek to understand. And thirdly, even if you end up disagreeing, can you do so in a charitable and loving way, not angry or bitter, towards those other people?

This is what Paul calls us to. For Christ's sake. Because if we have fellowship in Christ together, if we are made the family of God, then Christ has given us a foundation for us to have this kind of unity with one another.

And he exhorts us to pursue that. How do we pursue this? Good gracious, this is really hard. Well, verses 3 and 4, Paul continues and he helps us see the mindset that enables us to pursue this kind of unity with one another.

[18 : 11] So look with me at verses 3 and 4. I'm going to read it again just so we remember what it says. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Friends, oh, and then verse 4. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Now look, friends, we need to recognize that what Paul exhorts us to here is not normal.

The fundamental stance of human beings since the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden is that we are self-centered. The solar system that we live in is the gravitational forces are focused around us.

Think about your work situation. How much time do you spend thinking about how other people relate to other people? How much time do you think about how much time you are relating to other people and how that works?

How many times in your own conversations with others do you think, I wonder what they're thinking? How can I let them win the argument in my mind that I'm about to have if I'm going to have a hard conversation?

[19 : 24] We never lose those arguments. We are fundamentally self-centered people. And we think about ourselves. Paul says, this is not how we are to be.

We so often are caught up with rivalry, which could also be translated selfish ambition. It's what Paul used in chapter 1, verse 17, described those who are preaching the gospel so that Paul would be punished and suffer.

Those who lift themselves up in a grasping sort of way, seeking to pile themselves higher on top of other people by looking down on them.

And the second word here in verse 3, rivalry or conceit. This conceit is literally empty glory, vain glory.

When we are driven by an emptiness in ourselves to use everybody and everything around us to try to fill a hole in our hearts. And we lift ourselves up by putting others down.

[20 : 29] And Paul says, this is not how we are to be, but instead to be humble. To count others as more important. Now let's think a little bit about humility.

In the first century, in a Greek context, a Roman context, they would look down on humility. Humility is weakness. Humility makes you less of a person. It demeans your humanity.

Maybe some of us think that today as well. But the nature of true humility, according to the Bible, is not thinking badly of ourselves or less of ourselves. But it's thinking about ourselves less.

That is, we stop being concerned with ourselves and we begin to be concerned with other people. This is what real humility looks like. C.S. Lewis has this great quote about what the beauty of true humility can look like.

He says, Do not imagine if you meet a really humble man that he will be what most people call, quote, humble nowadays. He will not be a sort of greasy, smarmy person who is always telling you that, of course, he is nobody.

[21 : 31] Probably all you will think about him is that he seemed cheerful. An intelligent chap who took a real interest in what you said to him. If you do dislike him, it will be because you feel a little envious of anyone who seems to enjoy life so easily.

He will not be thinking about humility. He will not be thinking about himself at all. If anyone would like to acquire humility, I can, I think, tell him the first step.

The first step is to realize that one is proud. And a biggish step, too. At least nothing whatever can be done before it. If you think you are not conceited, it means you are very conceited indeed.

Penetrating words for us. The beauty of real humility and yet recognizing how easily our pride clouds it.

Paul clarifies then, how do we consider others more than ourselves? It's a sense of surpassing need. So verse 4, Let each of you look not only to his interests but also to the interests of others.

[22 : 40] This is what it means to count others as more significant. Right? It means that their needs, their desires, their wants take precedence over yours.

Now look, I need to clarify this a little bit. It does not mean simply being a doormat. It does not simply mean people-pleasing. It certainly does not mean accepting abusive behavior from someone else over in the guise of being humble.

It does not mean that we cannot express our needs to one another. And we want to recognize, too, that in verse 5, it assumes a self-orientation.

Right? If you look at verse 4, and particularly if you use a New American Standard, it literally says, do not look out for your own interests, but look out for the interests of others also.

And the way it's written, it assumes that we will look out for ourselves. It knows that this is our bent. And it's saying, give greater weight to the need of others around you.

[23 : 42] When I first encountered Christianity, real Christians, I went to a day camp. I was in 5th or 6th grade.

My parents didn't know what they were doing when they sent me. But it was something to do for a week or two during the summer. And this camp had a theme, a saying that this had, you know.

And it was, I'm third. And so the counselors all raised this when they wanted everyone to be quiet. And we'd all have to do this. And this meant I'm third. Right? Because Christ is first.

And others are second. And I'm third in the world. And this is what Paul is telling us here. How can we be those who help others flourish?

How can we be their greatest fan? How can the people that we interact with go away built up and encouraged, strengthened in who they are?

[24 : 41] Feeling like they were the center of the conversation and not us. This is what we are called to do. And how do we do this?

Well, we look at Christ. Friends, this is the mind of Christ.

We just sang about it. He left heaven and came to earth. He forsook the privilege of being in heaven with the Father ruling.

And He came and He humbled Himself. And He took on human form. And He suffered. And He was obedient even to the point of death. And He did it for us.

He looked out for our interests by becoming human so that He could be our Savior through His life and death and resurrection.

[26 : 01] Because Christ has called us into this new family together through this salvation. And we sit here as this diverse group of people that would have no other reason to gather here this morning except for that.

Since we have all these things, how could we not in humility look at one another and love them?

Having this mind among us. Friends, this is the mind that brought Lydia, the purple cloth seller, and the Pythian slave girl, and the jailer and his family into a church in Philippi.

And it's the same thing that brings us together today. Have this mind among us that the gospel might be on display.

Have this mind among us that the beauty of community would not only be experienced among us, but would overflow so that the world would see what a great Savior we serve.

[27 : 12] May it be so. Let's pray. Lord Jesus, when we hear these commands, Lord, it is hard. For we acknowledge to You, Lord, that we are proud, that we are selfish, that we are sinful.

Lord, that we do not love one another as we are. Lord, that we are proud that we are. Lord, we separate from others that You have brought into our spiritual family.

And Lord, we think more highly of ourselves than we do of others. Oh, Lord, have mercy on us today. Lord, we pray that as we gaze upon the person of Christ, that You would give us this mind that He had as well.

Lord, thank You, in fact, that You have already given it to us. Lord, may we take hold of that and activate it in our own hearts and minds today. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.