**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 10-22-2023  
Oneness of Mind**

One of the things that we all realize sooner or later in this world is that we need community to thrive. The Lord said that it is not good for man to be alone. I believe that this speaks to our need to be in community with others. We are not meant to be living as islands unto ourselves. We are meant to be in connection with others. This is what God’s church is intended to be – a healthy, vibrant Christian community of love and support and encouragement.

But Satan loves to isolate people, doesn’t he? And this isolation makes them more prone to give in to Satan’s many lies. The reality is that it is much easier to pluck people off one at a time than when they are in community with others.

Now, does healthy community and relationships come easier? Normally it takes effort and intentionality and vulnerability to bring this about. But when this is realized, something very beautiful takes place. It is a powerful witness to the world.

One of the challenges that make this difficult is that all people, including Christians, are works in progress and more than capable of sin. And people can sometimes rub one another the wrong way or say or do the wrong thing to one another. This leads to hurt feelings and getting offended and holding grudges.

Raise your hand if you’ve ever been wronged by another Christian. It is painful. And that can make practicing community more difficult.

But I want to tell you today, friends, that Christian community is something worth fighting for. In other words, it is very important. When there is healthy Christian community there is a oneness of mind that takes place. This doesn’t mean that everyone thinks exactly alike, but it does mean that everyone is seeking to think more and more like Jesus.

This morning, as we continue exploring Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi, we will discover that pursuing healthy Christian community was something that even the early church struggled with. No matter what we may think, things were not perfect in the early church.

Even in looking at this letter alone, we know that the church was facing challenges. There was the danger of false teachers and distorting the truth of the gospel. There was the threat of persecution bringing out. But today’s passage reveals that there was friction within the church. Perhaps this would be the greatest threat facing the church in Philippi.

So let us turn to our text this morning, Philippians 4:2-3 New International Version (NIV)

**2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.** **3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.**

Before we dive into this passage, it is noteworthy to see that Scriptures such as this point to leadership within the early church not being exclusive to men. There were female leaders in the early church, including these two women – Euodia and Syntyche. I believe that God gifts both men and women in a variety of ways, including teaching and preaching and leading God’s people in a variety of ways. This is one thing that I appreciate about the Methodist tradition, as it values this truth.

In fact, in my opinion, the most gifted preacher in my seminary preaching class was female.

And I believe as Christians understand the New Testament in its proper context, most will be convinced that God calls people of both sexes to be leaders in His church and in a variety of ways.

With that being said, let’s take a closer look at what was going on in Philippi and why this was such a serious concern. Apparently, there were two female leaders, Euodia and Syntyche, that were in the midst of a serious disagreement about something. And Paul was very concerned by this. This seemed to have potential to split the church over some non-essential matter.

Now we do not know the specific nature of this disagreement, but whatever it was, it was not a disagreement over an essential doctrine of the faith. It appears that both were leaders in the church and both were true Christians because Paul writes that their names are written in the book of life.

But something was indeed very wrong. This disagreement had strained not only their relationship with one another, but seems to be affecting the entire church. Divisions were beginning to form. Sides were likely being taken. And Paul wanted this to stop quickly.

It is good to note that Paul does not pick sides in this disagreement, but strongly urges both of the parties to be of the same mind in the Lord. In other words, both of these women were to turn to Christ and look for Christ to help them mend their relationship.

There would likely have to be grace offered to one another. Forgiveness would be essential in this situation. Apologizing and confessing to one another, difficult but important steps, would likely need to be taken. These are hard things to do.

The key is that both parties needed to remembered that they were sisters in Christ and on the same team. This would be the HUGE step in bringing about healing in their relationship. This would, indirectly, bring healing to the entire church.

For when there is healing and reconciliation between two people in the church, it impacts the larger church for the good. And conversely, when there is division and offense between two people in the church, it negatively impacts the entire church as well.

Again, we are not talking about doctrinal issues. The authority of Scripture; the resurrection of Jesus; things of this nature. Those would be things worth dividing over as the church needs to be grounded on the truth of the gospel. But we are not talking about that here. These women were both true Christians. Both of them had their names written in the Book of Life.

But there was a serious disagreement and Paul was very concerned about this. Any heated disagreement between brothers and sisters in Christ is a concern, but especially when it is between church leaders.

Paul refers to these women as those that had contended at his side in the cause of the gospel. This means that these were leaders in the church. Perhaps these were some of the women that were there at the very beginning, when Paul first shared the good news of Jesus in Philippi ten years earlier.

But now, something has damaged this relationship. These two female leaders are experiencing serious friction and disunity over one matter or another. And Paul was calling them back to being one in their thinking.

Friends, Euodia and Syntche were different. Euodia and Syntyche probably had different spiritual gifts and certainly different personalities. And Paul is not saying that these things needed to change.

But Paul does plead with them to come together in the Lord and be of one mind. Whatever was going on, it was serious enough for Paul to plead for them to be reconciled. Pleading is a strong word. It implies begging or strongly encouraging them to try to think from one another’s perspective. Maybe there is forgiveness that is needed by one or both parties. Maybe they needed to learn to listen to one another and hear each other out.

Again, we do not know the details. We can only speculate. But Paul is making it clear that spiritual unity and having oneness of mind within the church is extremely important.

Paul does not say that they need to come to the same opinion or come into complete agreement on whatever it was, instead he calls them to humbly turn to the Lord and remember their unity in Jesus. They were to be intentional in seeking Jesus’ perspective on this matter.

Paul also encourages other believers in Philippi to actively help with bringing conflict to a positive resolution. Again, the sense of community, when it is done well, can be of great help during challenges like this.

As Christians today, what is the main thing that we need to remember? And I believe that it is this. We need to remember that Christian community is very important to God and should be very important in God’s church. In fact, it is so important, it is worth fighting for. It is so important, that we need to proactively pursue healing and peace and reconciliation where there is brokenness and fracturing in relationships.

All of us are a work in progress. All of us may do things or say things that may not perfectly reveal Christ. We need to be merciful and forgiving with one another.

And if a Euodia and Syntyche’s situation ever arises, we must all pursue the mind of Christ and be willing to be peacemakers. The easy thing to do is to cover things up and pretend that things are okay or to be quietly resentful.

But that is not the way of Christ or the mind of Christ. Paul describes the mindset of Christ very vividly in Philippians chapter 2 – it is a mind of humanity and sacrificial giving.

And Paul is exhorting these two sisters in Christ to be of the same mind in the Lord. If both of these women were totally committed to following Jesus, then they should pursue healing in their relationship with one another.

Spiritual unity in Christ is important to God. God’s heart is blessed when his people are at peace with one another. And it is a powerful witness to the world of the power of the gospel, to bring people together, with all different backgrounds, but also all united in following after Jesus.

I think about Jesus in His famous sermon on the mount. During the amazing sermon at one point, Jesus tells His listeners, **“if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.”**

So basically, Jesus is saying that sometimes the most important offering someone can make is the offering of pursing spiritual unity with someone else in God’s church. Maybe an apology would be appropriate, maybe forgiveness is needed. But God wants His church to deeply value spiritual unity and being of one mind in the Lord.

Again, this does not mean that we all have to agree on everything to be unity in the Lord. But, we are collectively called to be pursing the Lord and growing in the mind of Christ.

At Chestnut Grove, we each have different spiritual gifts and graces. But as we pursue Christian community and growing in the mind of Christ together, we will be far less likely to become offended at one another and much quicker to forgive when we do get offended.

We firmly believe that our Lord Jesus has called us to be a light on a hill sharing His love in this world. Our light shines brightest when we are living a vibrant Christian community, encouraging one another, helping one another through disagreements, and offering grace and mercy to one another.

May our gracious and merciful King help us in all of these ways as we pursue His mind in everything we do. Amen.

Let us pray...

Resources: [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

Paul’s Letter to the Philippians by Gordon D. Fee (The New International Commentary on the New Testament)

Philippians Revised by Gerald F. Hawthorne & Ralph P. Martin (Word Biblical Commentary)