

Sermon 2023 10 01 Text

In the name of God; the source of creation; the existence of our restoration; and our companion on the journey.

¹ If then there is any encouragement in Christ,
any consolation from love,
any sharing in the Spirit,
any compassion and sympathy,
² make my joy complete:
be of the same mind,
having the same love,
being in full accord
and of one mind.

Philippians 2: 1 and 2

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These words from the Letter to the Philippians create a beautiful and eloquent opening to this document of correspondence.

It is certainly significantly better than “Dear Philippians,”.

It comes from a time when the Church, as we know, it is being established, putting down the roots of its foundation.

It is a time when the truth of the Good News of Christ and the beginnings of the early church are like a plant.

But this plant is not an accidental growth, and the gardener is not a novice.

One time long ago, in the dreaming of creation, this gardener took sterile, bare earth. The faithful gardener enriched, planted,

and nurtured that soil and the seeds planted in it to a mature place bursting with life, energy, beauty, and innocence. The gardener brought in creatures that drew sustaining life from the fruit of the garden and flourished in a place of harmony.

All life was dependent on that harmony. The plants brought forth vegetation and fruit. The animals were sustained by the growth and in their living took nurture from the growth of the earth -- and – in their living and in their dying – gave back sustaining energy so that the cycle of this separated place was in perfect balance.

We could look on that place and know that in a microcosm of nurture and respect all life could reach and perpetuate all that was good and noble in a space of perfection; separate from any disharmony created in the storms and wars that raged outside that beautiful, balanced, and peaceful place.

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In that space a single seed could fall into the ground. If conditions were right, the seed grew and sent out two structures.

It sent out roots to anchor it in the soil and to glean nutrients and moisture from that soil.

And it sent out a stem and leaves and flowers into the air to glean nutrients and moisture from the atmosphere.

And it gave back leaves to feed and flowers to grow through beauty into capsules of new life to sustain the cycles of life and death.

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But one creature, and one creature alone, was dissatisfied with the peace and joy of this self-sustaining peaceful place.

We found a small imperfection in the barrier that separated perfect joy and peace from the swirling powers of death and destruction.

We picked away at the small imperfection and in our arrogance, we shattered the membrane which separated perfect life and perfect beauty from the elements of physical, intellectual, and spiritual destruction which swirled and pounded on the membrane of separation.

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And in our belligerent desire to possess everything, we destroyed all those things which allowed us to live in innocence and perfect harmony.

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As the offspring of what is now a distant God, we toil in the heat and shrivel in the cold; we live in the parched, lifeless land; or in the pounding of the eroding waves. We have lost the capacity to love all, embrace all, care for all. Now it is separation and neglect; barriers and harsh words.

This distant God has compassion and we are offered a portion of the existence of God to become a new foundation on which to rebuild that space of harmony and peace.

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Paul's letter is to a people building on the new foundation – a people who have discovered that the Christ is that new foundation, and who are beginning to construct a framework of

love within which the attributes of creative, enhancing love are used to nurture the spirit of place to become a new manifestation of that place where the whole of creation is celebrated and leveraged into a constantly expanding space of joy.

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So that opening of the letter draws us together in celebration of creation. And we bind ourselves to Francis of Assisi who was able to discern the unity that existed within all that God had made. He celebrated the wild creatures and the domesticated creatures. He celebrated our unity with the seasons and he celebrated "... brother sun and sister moon..." and saw the beauty and purpose of a unifying connection within all creation.

And as our celebration of creation and recreation draws to a close, we honour those creatures who nourish us physically or emotionally. We celebrate pet, livestock and wild creature.

We celebrate the spirit of original creation that we hold as treasure. And we hold the spirit of new creation coursing through us to explode into a world devoid of hope, devoid of charity.

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In the touch of the sun on upturned faces; in the unrestrained laughter of the children; in the hopefulness and energy of the ageing, and in the bubbling sounds of ordinary human existence – we are called to be part of the extra-ordinary lives who live with a single unifying mind, and a single unifying purpose to proclaim that to be "in Christ" and to reunite in absolute harmony, is the greatest achievement of a life and to draw others into that community is the crown glory of the divine purpose.

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