

Reflections from a United Methodist Pastor

December 13, 2020

Lesson 2

Imitate Christ

Philippians 2:1-11

These verses hardly sound like something written by a man in prison. Ordinarily, one might think that a prisoner is going to be concerned mostly about self, but the Apostle Paul spoke of community (“being united,” verse 2) and working for the common good (“agreeing with each other,” verse 2). Paul urged his readers to “watch out for what is better for others” (verse 4). Why would a man stuck in prison keep telling the Philippian Christians to think about and work for others?

It is because to do so is to imitate Christ (verse 5).

Paul then shifted into what was probably a hymn sung by the early church (verses 6-11). Some students of the Bible think that in these poetic verses, Paul was quoting a hymn that the Philippian congregation already knew. With these words, he unfolded an account of how Jesus lived his life as one for others.

What does that look like for us? During last Lent, Tyler Williams included these thoughts in a devotional he wrote for the North Carolina Conference: “I hope we see a church composed of a beautiful diversity of people. I hope we see a church stronger and more resilient because we courageously stuck together. I hope we see a church bound together not by lock-step agreement, but by the Holy Spirit. I hope we see a church where people might disagree politically or theologically but love each other unconditionally. I hope we see a church where no member would ever consciously or unconsciously say or think of another, ‘I have no need of you.’”¹

Prayer: As you prepare this lesson let your prayer begin: “Lord Jesus, you have shown us how to live; now, walk with us as we try to follow your example.”

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¹<https://nccumc.org/reflections/lent-2020/lenten-reflection-day-22-tyler-williams/>