

Philippian 2:1-4_Unlocking Joy: Through Living Worthy of the Church_sermon Script_223 Feb2023

When last we met, we spent our time discussing the importance of living a life that screams the Gospel and the identifying marks of those who do. Such a distinction is necessary because the last thing this world needs is more false representations of Jesus Christ. We got enough wannabes running around.

That was last week. Today, we're shifting gears to talk about what it means to live worthy of the Church. As the collected body that make up BFC - Living Worthy of the Church (big-C CHURCH) - the church universal.

Let me ask you something—what kind of church do you really want to be a part of?

Do you want a church that just exists—where people show up, go through the motions, and leave unchanged? Or do you want to be part of something real—a church that actually looks like Jesus? A church where grace is more than a word, where unity is more than a slogan, and where people actually put others before themselves?

Because here's the truth: the Church is only as strong as the doctrine it stands on and the people in it. It's not just about leadership. It's not just about programs. It's not about location. It's about you.

You determine if this church is full of grace or full of drama. You determine if we're unified in Christ's mission or divided by our own agendas. You determine if we serve one another or just serve ourselves.

This isn't someone else's responsibility—it's ours.

And let's be real—too often, we get it wrong. We let division creep in. We make it about us instead of Him. We hold grudges, chase comfort, and treat church like a service we consume instead of a family we belong to.

And when that happens, we fail to be the Church Jesus died to build.

That's why Paul, sitting in a prison cell, pleads with the Philippians—and with us: Live worthy of the Church.

So today, I have just one question for you:

Are you ready and willing to do what it takes to help BFC be a place known for living worthy of the church?

Because it won't just happen by accident. It takes all of us—united, committed, and focused.

Paul gives us three marks of a church that is truly living worthy of the church.

And it starts with this: They are strengthened by their shared grace.

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What I have for us are three identifying marks of a Church that is living worthy of the Church. Beginning with: They....

Are strengthened by their shared grace. v1

Paul says... "1 If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, "...

Paul is using these four reminders of God's work in their lives to stir them to action—to do whatever it took to stay unified and support one another.

His first remembrance, “If there is any encouragement in Christ,” took them back to moments when the Holy Spirit strengthened them. Maybe it was when they faced rejection from friends and family because of their faith, yet God gave them peace. Or perhaps it was in a season of suffering when they felt weak, but Christ lifted their spirits and kept them going. Paul wanted them to remember those times and let that same encouragement drive them to protect their unity.

Like the Philippians, all of us have had moments where the Holy Spirit stepped into our struggles. Times when we were overwhelmed, unsure of what to do, or how to move forward—yet God showed up and said, “I got this.”

Maybe it was a season of financial stress, and out of nowhere, a need was met in a way you couldn’t explain. Or perhaps you were battling loneliness, and at just the right time, God sent the right person to encourage you.

Remembering those times—is not just as personal testimony, rather it’s fuel to strengthen their unity. If God has been that faithful to each of us, how much more should we strive to stand together as one?

Paul’s second remembrance, “if any consolation of love...”, points directly to their experience of Christ’s love—a love unlike anything they had known before.

God loves us unconditionally. He walks with us through our struggles and our victories. His love never fades, never fails. There are no contingencies attached to his love.

His love is the type love every R&B artist sings about but can never find in their lover. It’s the love we longed for from our parents, the love we hope to experience in our marriage, the love we desperately want to give our children, and the love we should have as a church.

And yet, too often, we don’t reflect this love in the church. We hold grudges. We let pride divide us. We withhold grace.

Paul’s message is straightforward: God’s unconditional love not only saved us—it should also unite us. Since His love is powerful enough to save, it’s strong enough to bind us together. Therefore commit to building and sustaining a loving church community.

Paul’s third remembrance, “if any fellowship with the Spirit...”, is a powerful reminder that the Philippians are not just individuals walking their own faith journeys—they are part of something much bigger.

They belong to the collective fellowship of believers, united by the Spirit of the living God. The Church universal, which consist of past, present, and future saints.

This isn’t just a shared belief system; it’s a shared life, a spiritual bond that transcends backgrounds, genders, ethnicities, personalities, and preferences. The Spirit, GTH within them is within every believer, and within us today.

That means they have no excuse to act like spiritual free agents b/c we are bound together through Christ.

Spiritual free agents are exactly what the term sounds like. People who treat church like a subscription service, showing up only when it benefits them.

Those who refuse to commit to a church family because they don’t want to be held accountable.

People who bounce from church to church, small group to small group, avoiding deep relationships because they don’t want to deal with the messiness that comes with belonging to a faith community.

People who are always looking for a reason to leave... the pastor didn’t speak to me today... The music was too loud... The coffee was too strong... Someone was in my seat.

Or they come with their personal agendas that they try to impose on the church and when they don’t get their way they jet of a church that will.

But that's not how the body of Christ works. We're on the same team, striving together for the same mission, serving the same God. And if we truly grasp this reality, it should change the way we treat one another.

Paul's fourth remembrance—"if any affection and mercy"—points to the divine compassion and mercy that Jesus showed the Philippians when He saved them. This wasn't just a past event; it was an ongoing reality in their lives. The same mercy that forgave their sins was now flowing between them as believers.

In other words, Christ's mercy toward them wasn't just something to receive; it was something to reflect. His forgiveness was both the reason and the motivation for them to extend mercy to one another. B/c Christ had shown them such great mercy, how could they not do the same for each other?

Extending mercy wasn't just the right thing to do—it was essential for their unity. Without mercy, small offenses would turn into major divisions, and differences would become sources of conflict rather than opportunities for grace.

Paul is hitting us right in the heart. These are more than mere instructions—he's pressing play on the highlight reel of our faith.

Imagine scrolling through your photo memories or watching a video montage of the most powerful moments in your walk with Christ:

That night you were at rock bottom, convinced no one saw you, that no one cared about you and God stepped and told you that he sees you, he loves you, and that he with you no matter what.

The moment you stood in a worship service, hands raised, not because you had it all together, but because you finally understood—grace wasn't something you earned, it was something God freely gives b/c he loves you.

The time you wrestled with doubt, questions swirling in your mind, and then God spoke—through a sermon, a friend, or His Word—so clearly that your faith anchored deeper than ever before.

The day you forgave someone who had hurt you deeply, not because they deserved it, but because Jesus had done the same for you.

The moment you stepped out in obedience—terrified, unsure of your future—but God's peace carried you, and you knew you were walking in His will.

Our memories of God's work in our lives, are more than mere reflections, they should drive a response in us.

Through his "if" statements, Paul is telling us—don't forget those moments when Christ loved, comforted, and carried you. Those are the proof of His work in you! And if He has done that for us, how can we not do the same for each other? This isn't optional. This is how we begin to live worthy of the church.

That's the first identifying mark... Second, they...

Find unity in Christ's mission—and fully embrace it. v2

Paul calls the Philippians to embrace the unity of their shared mission in v2, when he says, "make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." This is not a call for mere agreement but for a unity that runs deep—a unity rooted in a shared mindset and purpose. He begins and ends this thought with the idea of "thinking the same way" or "intent on one purpose," emphasizing a singular focus that binds believers together.

And what is this shared purpose? Well it's the Gospel. Paul underscores its centrality throughout ch.1, referring to no less than five times. And in [Philippians 1:27](#), he commands... "Just one thing: As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ." This charge carries forward into chapter 2, shaping how believers are to live and interact with each other. Their unity is not merely about agreement but about a shared commitment to live out and advance the gospel together.

This kind of unity is not just about intellectual alignment but about a shared devotion to Christ that shapes how they live, love, and serve. Which is important for us to understand.

B/c too often, we ascribe the cliché that “the purpose of the church is worship God” without recognizing that if the gospel of Christ is not at the center, it’s not a true Church. Worship is not just about singing songs or attending services—it is about a life fully aligned with the gospel.

Without the gospel at the center, we lose everything—our foundation, our faith, our identity, our unity, and our mission. When that happens, the church becomes no different from any other well-meaning organization that exist to help people.

And if we’re not careful, the church can drift into being just another social organization rather than the body of Christ. Citizens of heaven working to live out their faith and expand God’s kingdom here on earth.

And the drift away from that, doesn’t happen all at once. It’s a slow, steady drift, like a boat that has been cut loose from the dock, that slowly drifts away into open water never to be scene again. It happens gradually, almost unnoticed, until one day the church is far from “Living worthy of the Gospel”.

You want to know what that looks like in real life? It looks like...

A church that has incredible worship, with gifted singers and musicians, a great atmosphere, and spiritually moving moments. But if the gospel isn’t preached clearly, people will leave feeling inspired—but they go back home confused and lost.

A church that is passionate about social justice, actively serving the poor, advocating for the oppressed, and fighting for change. But if the gospel isn’t the motivation, it becomes just another humanitarian effort rather than than saving lost souls.

A church can be full of programs, ministries, and events, offering something for every age and interest. But if the gospel isn’t at the core, it becomes nothing more than a well-run community center rather than a place of true transformation.

Paul is calling the church to be gospel-driven in everything—not just in what we preach, but in how we love, how we serve, and how we live. The gospel is the unifying purpose that binds us together and fuels true worship.

Without it, the church turns into a performance venue, a charity organization, or a social club—but not the Church. The living body of Christ commissioned to represent God and to expand His kingdom.

Paul was all in on this. He told the Philippians that their commitment to keeping the gospel at the center of everything would "make his joy complete." In other words, his deepest satisfaction, his greatest joy, came from knowing they were willing to pour themselves out for the gospel—spending and being spent for the unity and progression of church. That’s all the happiness Paul wanted!

And why is Pauls so passionate about this for the Philippians? B/c he knew that a church truly united in the gospel doesn’t waste time on nonsense. They’re not caught up in drama about who got the credit. They’re not arguing over who got the big piece of Chicken at “Open Table”. They’re not bothered by doing 5th Sunday prayer walks for our neighbors. They’re not tripping over music styles. They’re not dividing over preferences that have nothing to do with the mission. They’re not fixated on secondary issues that don’t advance the kingdom.

To Embrace the unity of our shared mission is to be servant minded. To point where you’re convinced that mission take priority over me. It’s about setting aside distractions and saying, "Jesus is all that matters." That’s the unity Paul was after. And that’s the focus the church must have in order to fully embrace the unity of our shared mission.

Are you all in for the Lord’s church like that? To the point where you can wholeheartedly say... Mission over me? Christ Church -his way - his Gospel over me and what I want? I sure hope that you are.

The final identifying mark of a church that is living worthy of the church is... they

Delight in putting others before themselves. v3-4

Paul leave no room for interpretation about putting the needs of others first. He says... "3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves."

Selfish ambition and conceit have always been embedded in the world's systems—driving competition, pride, and the pursuit of status. In the secular Greek culture of Jesus' day, humility and lowliness were not seen as virtues. Those terms were rarely used, and when they were, they carried a negative connotation—implying weakness, servitude, or even shameful inferiority.

However, conceit, thinking your God's gift to the world, has only grown in acceptance and popularity. In some circles it's practically a requirement. Just look at our modern culture—self-promotion is an art form. Social media has turned arrogance into an aesthetic, where people craft their own highlight reels to gain admiration and validation. Influencers curate their lives to appear flawless, politicians boast of their achievements while blaming everyone else for failures, and celebrities make headlines not for their humility, but for their audacity.

Think about the self-absorbed bravado of athletes who refer to themselves as "the GOAT" (Greatest of All Time) or CEOs who write books on their own genius, as if their success was entirely self-made. And celebrity pastor who fly around in private Jets b/c they're too important to sit with the common people on commercial flight. We live in a world where conceit isn't just accepted—it's celebrated.

However, the mark of church that is living worthy of the Gospel looks completely different, "in humility they consider others as more important than themselves"

I think of Tim Keller and his approach to ministry and leadership in this regard.

Tim Keller, the late pastor and founder of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, had every reason to elevate himself. He was a bestselling author, a widely respected theologian, and one of the most influential Christian voices in recent decades. Yet, despite his success, Keller was known for his deep humility.

One of the clearest examples of this was how he structured Redeemer's leadership. Instead of building the church around his personality, he worked to decentralize his influence so that the church could thrive without him. He intentionally shared leadership, developed other pastors, and resisted the temptation to make himself the face of the ministry. Even at the height of his fame, he avoided becoming a celebrity pastor, declining opportunities to brand himself or use his name for personal gain.

As Redeemer grew, Keller could have easily stayed in the spotlight indefinitely. But instead of clinging to his role, he stepped away when the time was right, transitioning the church into multiple smaller congregations rather than keeping it as a large, centralized institution. He wanted the Gospel, not himself, to be the lasting legacy of Redeemer Church.

Even in his final years as he battled cancer, Keller continued to serve others—mentoring young pastors, engaging in deep theological conversations, and always pointing people to Christ rather than himself.

This is what counting others as more significant than yourself looks like in today's world. It's refusing to build a platform for personal glory, choosing to equip others rather than seeking recognition, and leading in a way that ensures the church is never about one man but always about Jesus.

I pray this for our church and long for you to experience it.

And if you're wondering why I used a pastoral example, that's b/c the church will only ever be as humble and others-focused as her leadership is. If leadership is conceited and self-centered, the church will follow suit—turning into a place where pride replaces service, competition replaces love, and status replaces sacrifice.

It will no longer be a family, but a network of self-seekers, where people measure their worth by how well they are seen, how much influence they hold, or how much they can gain from their connections.

Instead of bearing one another's burdens, people will avoid each other's struggles because they don't benefit from them. Instead of building each other up, people will focus on building their own reputation. The church will become a stage for self-promotion rather than a place of genuine transformation.

But that is not what Christ intended for His church. The church is meant to be the clearest picture of selfless, sacrificial love that the world sees. A place where leaders model humility, members serve one another with joy, and every person delights in putting others first—not out of obligation, but because that's what it means to follow Jesus.

That's why Paul's words in [Philippians 2:4](#) matter so much: "4 Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others."

A humble church starts with humble leadership. A humble church looks out for each other. A humble church, shines in a world obsessed with self, and makes much of Jesus rather than itself. A humble church is what every community needs and every member should strive to be.

May we be that church. May we be those people. And may the world see Jesus through the way we love, serve, and lift up one another.

Conclusion

Church, the call is clear: If we are to be a church that lives worthy of the Church, we cannot settle for anything less than full devotion to Christ and to one another. Paul wasn't just giving the Philippians a pep talk—he was charging them with a divine mandate. And that same mandate is for us.

We have seen three undeniable marks of a church that is living worthy of the gospel:

They are strengthened by their shared grace.
They find unity in Christ's mission—and fully embrace it.
They delight in putting others before themselves.

That's the standard for the church.

So the question that remains is: Will we be that church?

Will we be a church where grace fuels our unity, where mission overrides our preferences, and where humility shapes our culture?

Will we continually choose Christ over comfort?

Will we continually embrace the selfless life of a true disciple and reject spiritual consumerism?

Will we keep on loving, serving, and sacrificing—not just when it's convenient, but because that's what the gospel demands?

This is what it means to live worthy of the Church. To be a people so gripped by Christ's love that we refuse to settle for anything less than His standard.

So, as we prepare to leave our place of worship, let's make a decision:

No more excuses. No more half-hearted commitment. No more living for ourselves.

Let's be the Church. For our good, God's glory, and the salvation of others.

Let's pray.

Closing