

Rappahannock Christian Church – 10/1/11

Dr. Kenneth Wilbur

Communion Meditation

We have this Table that we come to week after week, which is to be a reminder of Christ. Wonderful, isn't it, that we have these *real*, physical Elements that we can hold and put in our mouths? They are to remind us that it was *real* pain and death that Christ suffered in our place. This is the reason we have these Elements, to remind us of all that Christ has done for us. On this World Communion Sunday we join thousands, perhaps millions, of other Christians in honoring Jesus and remembering His sacrifice for us. Let me read you these words from the first letter to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 – The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

“Pressing On”

What ever is a preacher to do?! Scot Katona has just preached my whole sermon in his prayer for the Loaf this morning! Really, I don't mind. It is wonderful to know that we are in such agreement about the Gospel message. We'll start by reading the Scripture reading from Philippians 3.

Philippians 3:4b-14 – If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Here in this passage Paul is talking about pressing on towards a goal.

Our lives are full of goals. We have short-term goals -- win that new client, secure that sale; teach the children in my class about fractions, build the staircase. Some are even

shorter-term than those: get to work on time this morning, take the chicken out of the freezer for supper. Then there are the longer-term goals like starting a family, working for a promotion, buying a home, planning for retirement.

For the Apostle Paul, the writer of the letter to the Philippians, many of these "everyday" goals have become secondary. Sure, he still has to "take the chicken out of the freezer," but since Paul has seen the Light of Christ a lot of other things in life have dimmed in importance.

Earthly powers, possessions, position – which he once worked toward and held dear -- he now considers "rubbish" compared to having eternal life in Christ. He is, instead, "pressing on, heavenward."

This week I was showing my mother-in-law photos of the trip that Rebecca, Lauren and I took when we brought Rebecca to school in Portland, Oregon a few summers ago. I got to the pictures of Denver. Colorado is just SO beautiful with those majestic mountains! Then we looked at Arizona. That place is just weird – all the brightly colored earth and rock formations. So cool! But could we get sidetracked and just stay in those places? No! We had to keep pressing on! We had to get to Portland. We had a destination.

This is what Paul is saying. He has a goal. Yes, there are enticing things to see and do all around, but he cannot let them side track him from what God has set in front of him.

This is about you and me, too. Like Paul, we have been called to a new life. And that new life is not lived by the same rules as the lives of people who do not know Christ. The goals are different. We (yes, I'm including all of us in this!) want nothing more than to meet God and hear Him say "Well done, good and faithful servant." We want *please* our Lord.

If this is so, then the earth-bound stuff is not so important, is it? Earth-bound stuff is tentative, temporary, risky! Earthquake, tsunami, fire, flood can destroy it in seconds! Illness, injury and death can snuff our plans out. So if our hopes and dreams and plans are bound up in these earthly things -- and we know they will come to nothing in the end -- then what are our lives adding up to? What have they counted for?

Whereas, my place in God's kingdom is sure! The Lord Jesus Christ, my Redeemer and my Savior, has won it for me. I trust the promises of God. How foolish to continue to pursue, as if of the highest importance, all that is temporary, fragile, earthly!!!! I'm going to invest myself in what is eternal, sure and lasting.

Now, maybe you disagree. Perhaps you think that Paul and the rest of us who follow Jesus are crazy and misguided. There is no God, no heaven, no eternal kingdom. What is real is what I can see and touch. Life is about getting what I WANT. That is, getting MORE wealth and power than my neighbors. Grab for all you can grab! And if others are hurt along the way, well, so what? There's no God to point the finger!

How different this attitude is from the Way of Christ! We who follow Him say that what you can see and taste and feel is NOT all there is. We have experienced God's call, God's touch. To us, God is a loving Father. He is so loving, in fact, that He sent His beloved Son to die an atoning death so that we do not have to pay the death penalty ourselves. It has been paid for us! We have been pardoned! Now Christ Jesus is our brother, and all these believers here today and around the world are our brothers and sisters.

We now live life in a relationship with God through Christ. We are committed to staying on the path God has laid out for us. THAT is what is most important now! We reject the faulty, flawed, meaningless plans that the world sets for us and we accept God's plan instead.

Of course we still have to get up and go to work in the morning. We still have to take the chicken out of the freezer. But all that we do has taken on a new perspective. *How can I perform everyday tasks in a way that pleases God? How can what I have and who I am be devoted to advancing God's agenda? What part can I play? I want my life to count for something. God has given me the chance - and I am NOT going to throw it away!*

Benediction

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:7