

The Letter of Paul to the Philippians Part 5
It's Not Your Circus, It's Not Your Monkeys
Philippians 1:12-20

I had a little bit of fun with this week's sermon title. I heard it from Sharon Ruyle who I think said she heard it from her husband Ron.

What do you think this title might imply? It's not your circus, it's not your monkeys...I think it means that we worry ourselves about a number of things or people that really we don't need to worry ourselves about.

Isn't it true that a lot of energy can be wasted thinking about what this person is doing or not doing. I know this is true in marriages and families but it is also true about a number of things and people in the world today.

I spend time thinking about what Trump has done, is doing and is going to do. I spend time thinking about what Pelosi has done, is doing and is going to do. And all this time thinking about this accomplishes what? Not much other than the fact that it drains our energy and puts us in a bad place where we can respond, react to what is happening in a very negative, unchristian way.

I have seen some people respond on Facebook to when Pelosi ripped up Trump's state of union address at the end of his speech. They posted pictures of an ape sitting behind Trump tearing up paper and stuffing it in his mouth. And there have been a number of other things like this on both sides. There have been some good, tasteful posting on how what each side have done is wrong and I think that is good. We need to stand up but there is a healthy way and an unhealthy way to respond isn't there?

But isn't it also true, that when we respond to a negative with a negative, we have stooped down to their level. Is responding poorly any better than what originally occurred?

We spoke a bit about this in Sunday School in our redeeming anger class. Does two wrongs make a right? It is very easy for us to become self-righteous because yes, what they did was wrong but that doesn't make what we do right.

I think Paul addresses this in **Galatians 6:1**, **“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”**

Tempted to do what? Slander or allow an unwholesome word to slip out of our mouths.

As Christians we have the opportunity and the power through Christ to take the high road! To be the salt and the light in an otherwise dark world. Let's see how Paul, Jesus and David handled themselves in similar situations.

Remember that Paul is sitting in Jail in Rome. News has come to his ears about some goings on back in Philippi and he responds to it in his letter. Look with me.

Philippians 1:15, **“Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice.”**

It seems as though there were individuals who disliked Paul, were jealous of him and the position he held within the church. I guess they thought if they put themselves up as higher, mightier than Paul that maybe it would impact Paul and possibly put him in place where he would maybe shrivel up, backed away and let those who were preaching have their way.

But Paul was stronger, more confident than that. He knew who he was in the Lord and such shenanigans didn't bother him. He took the high road and was not offended, he only saw the good of what was occurring.

In essence he said, I know their motives are not completely pure. There is pride in their heart but the truth is, they are preaching Christ and for this I choose, and that is the big thing he did, he chose to rejoice in Christ being preached. He didn't worry about the littleness of men's hearts but only that Christ was being high and lifted up.

Paul didn't get sucked into the negative dialogue of what was going on. In fact quite the opposite. He created positive dialogue.

Isn't

1. It easy for us to get sucked into the negative dialogue of the day

So much is going on and we see and hear others creating a negative dialogue and if we are not careful then we can get sucked into it. But we are different aren't we?

2. We, like Paul, we have been given the ability to create positive dialogue by lifting up Christ and our Christ-like virtues

Now, Paul wasn't the only one to deal with negative dialogue. Jesus ran into this stuff with His disciples as well. Look with me.

John 9:38-40, “John said to Him, ‘Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to prevent him because he was not following us. But Jesus said, ‘Do not hinder him, for there is not one who will perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is for us.’”

Just think about what the disciples said. They are not with us, they are not following us, so we tried to stop them. I cant imagine how they tried to stop them. I guess they might have been telling them that if you are not following Jesus like we are then you need to stop what you are doing.

Now before we are too hard on the disciples think about this for a moment. We are not the only church in town. There is also the Baptist, the Pentecostals and the Catholics as well as many others out beyond Wiggins. How easy is it for us to harbor thoughts in our hearts that they are not like us. They don't do church the same way we do so they must be wrong.

You might not deal with thoughts like this but I did early in my ministry. Like the apostles I thought my way was the only way, the truth and the life. It took a while for me to realize that what was going on out there was not my circus, not my monkeys, not mine to worry about. Christ could work with them just fine.

We are all doing kingdom of God work. Sure some of it might be different in style but he who is not against us is for us right? Not my circus, it is God's to do with whatever He wants to do. And guess what? I have enough right here on my plate, in my life and in the ministry of the Community Church to worry about what someone else down the road is or is not doing.

In other words, this is my circus and you are my monkeys.

Let me share this with you. The Baptist Church has extended a call to a young man and his family from Ohio. The family will be here to candidate on the 16th. If they are called they will have a house to sell and then will be looking to purchase one here local. What is our response? To pray for God's will for the Baptist church. To be excited for them and for the Kingdom of God to be expanded through them.

I would venture a guess that the local population in Wiggins and around us in the country is somewhere around 3,000 or more. If each of the four churches had up to 200 or more in attendance we would still only be reaching a third of the local population. There is plenty of Kingdom work for all us to do.

Paul didn't worry about what others were doing. Jesus was bothered by what others were doing. Now let's look at a little more difficult situation. David in the Old Testament before he was king.

David was an outstanding king. He was chosen by God to lead the Israelites to a place where their country was prosperous, victorious over neighboring countries who wanted to run over and rule over their land. Much like what is happening today in the middle east, the countries in and around Israel were very rarely at peace and content with where they were as a nation.

By walking with God, David was able to bring the nation of Israel to place where they experienced great peace and prosperity. But it wasn't always this way for David.

If you know David's story you know that he was anointed through God's leading by Samuel, the reigning prophet of Israel, to be the next king. This was probably at the age of 14 or so. Not very long after this David killed Goliath and came to the attention of Saul, the reigning King of Israel.

Saul elevated David to one of the highest ranking positions of his army and wherever Saul sent David, he was successful in battle because God was with him.

Saul, who had lost the anointing of God became very jealous of David and sought to kill him many times. In fact, Saul eventually sent his army to hunt David down and kill him. Look at one of the many Psalms David wrote about this time when Saul was trying to kill him.

Psalm 129:2-3, “Many times they have persecuted me from my youth up; yet they have not prevailed against me. The plowers plowed upon my back; They lengthened their furrows.”

You can hear David’s pain, the plowers plowed my back, they lengthened their furrows. Ever feel that way?

I can just imagine David sitting, watching a farmer with a plow, cutting through the soil, watching them as they were digging deeper and deeper into the soil. I bet his was thinking about his persecutors and how they were digging deeper and deeper into his soul, into his heart. The furrows, the pain and suffering he was experiencing were getting longer and deeper.

But even though he was being chased and persecuted David always took the high road.

In fact, David even had a chance to eliminate Saul, to take out the one who was causing all the pain. And guess what? He could have justified his actions because he knew he was anointed to become the next king. Why not hurry up the process a little so the pressure would be off and so he could get on with his life.

As Saul was chasing David the following occurred.

David went up to where Saul was camped, caught everyone sleeping and he and a companion snuck up to Saul when he was sleeping. David's companion said the following.

1 Samuel 26, "...Today God has delivered your enemy into your hand; now therefore, please let me strike him with a spear to the ground with one stroke, and I will not strike him the second time. But David said to him, 'Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the Lord's anointed and be without guilt?' David also said, 'As the Lord lives, surely the Lord will strike him, or his day will come that he dies or he will go down into battle and perish.'"

Do you see what David did here? He took the high road. He didn't get sucked into a negative action. He didn't speak ill of Saul or take any action against him. He left judgment to the Lord.

In all three cases, Paul, Jesus and David, we see they all took the high road. They changed the dialogue that was going on around them into a positive, God centered one. And by doing so they protected their own purity and they protected how people saw God in them and through them.

This is where we want to be isn't? Exuding Christ-likeness, the qualities of Christ and creating new, positive dialogue that lifts Christ up.

I know we need to be reminded of this because of the days we live in. All around us the world is filled with hate, anger and attacking each other but we get to be the salt and light to this world. Let's take a few minutes to remind ourselves of what the salt and light look like.

I am going to need your help. I want us to go slowly through these next passages to let them sink in. I would like to have several volunteers to read through each scripture slowly, thoughtfully.

Let's begin...

Markoe, Russell, put each verse on a separate slide where the breaks are. And do not change the slide till I prompt you...Thanks!

Luke 6 – The High Road

“And (Jesus) turning His gaze toward His disciples, He *began* to say... Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven.

“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is *that* to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is *that* to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same *amount*. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.

Give, (mercy, love, pardon, prayers, blessings) and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

+++++

You are smart people. You don't need me to break these passages down to you. I am praying these over myself and over you. I get it, we are human, subject to weaknesses and failures. But we are also Christian, Spirit filled and Spirit empowered to walk the high road, to be the salt and light of the world.

What a great opportunity we have to be different, to be trend setters, negative dialogue enders and positive Christ-like dialogue starters.

Please take these passages home with you, pray over them, asking for forgiveness where you have failed and for the leading and strength of the Holy Spirit to help you take the high road, the road of godliness.

Amen

Let's pray