

- I. My Notes ... WWC message 4/25
- II. Series: Koinonia — The Joy of Living in Unity with Christ
 - Title: Leaking Grace: The Beauty of a Shared Life
 - Text: Philippians 1:21-30
 - Quote: “God does not choose people because of their ability, but because of their availability.” — Brother Andrew
- III. Introduction
 - Over the last two weeks, Paul has shown us the beauty and depth of koinonia — a shared life rooted in Christ, a shared joy anchored in truth, a shared mission that advances even in chaos. We’ve seen that Christian community is not a social club; it’s a participation in Christ’s life, Christ’s mission, Christ’s suffering, and Christ’s joy. We’ve watched Paul rejoice in prison, not because circumstances were good, but because Christ was being proclaimed and the church was standing with him. We’ve learned that joy doesn’t come from escaping the noise of the world but from anchoring ourselves to the truth of the Gospel in the middle of it. Koinonia has a heartbeat — shared grace, shared courage, shared transformation — and Paul has been teaching us to hear that heartbeat again.
 - Most of us don’t wake up in the morning thinking about courage or unity or spiritual partnership. We wake up thinking about survival. We wake up to noise — the noise of headlines, the noise of pressure, the noise of expectations, the noise of our own thoughts. And somewhere in that noise, we start to believe a quiet lie: “I’m not enough. I’m too cracked. Too tired. Too broken. Too inconsistent. Too flawed to matter.” And that lie shapes how we see ourselves, how we see others, and how we see God.
 - There’s an old story that helps us see ourselves more clearly (I have used this before, but it fits here too) ... the story of the water bearer and the cracked pot. A man carried two clay pots on a pole across his shoulders. One was perfect. The other had a crack on its side. Every day, the cracked pot leaked water along the path and felt ashamed of its failure. It apologized to the water bearer: “I’m sorry. I’m not like other pots. I lost what you gave me. I’m not useful.” But the water bearer smiled and said, “Look at your side of the path.” And for the first time, the cracked pot noticed flowers — bright, beautiful, blooming. “I planted seeds there,” the water bearer said, “because I knew you would water them. Your crack didn’t waste water. It created beauty.”
 - This story is more than a children’s illustration. It’s a picture of koinonia — the shared life of Christ flowing through imperfect people. It’s a picture of unity — not built on perfection, but on participation. And it’s a picture of courage — the courage to believe that God can use what we see as weakness to bring life to someone else.

- But here's the deeper truth beneath the story: The only reason our cracks don't disqualify us is because of the Great Exchange. Christ takes what is ours — our sin, our shame, our weakness, our brokenness — and gives us what is His — His righteousness, His strength, His courage, His life.
- That's why Paul can say, "To live is Christ." Because the life he's living isn't his own anymore — it's Christ's life in him.
- And that changes everything.
 - It means our brokenness doesn't push us out of the mission — it pulls us deeper into it.
 - It means our weakness doesn't threaten unity — it strengthens it.
 - It means our suffering doesn't silence our witness — it amplifies it.
 - It means our cracks don't leak failure — they leak grace.
- This is where Paul takes us next in his letter to the church in Philippi. He moves from the comfort of shared life to the courage of shared purpose. From the joy of partnership to the strength of unity. From surviving the chaos to contending for the faith together. Because koinonia isn't just about sharing meals and prayers — it's about sharing courage.
- It's about standing firm when the world shakes.
- It's about striving side by side when pressure rises.
- It's about believing that Christ's life in us is stronger than the cracks in us.
- Paul is inviting us into a different kind of community — a community where Christ is our very life, unity is our shared calling, courage is our daily posture, and the Great Exchange is the foundation beneath our feet. This is a community where our cracks don't disqualify us but actually water the path for someone else's growth. It is a fellowship where we don't cling to the Gospel with white-knuckled effort — because the Gospel is already holding on to us. And a safe place where surviving the pressures of the world isn't the goal, but standing shoulder to shoulder and contending for the faith with one heart and one mind happens.
- This is the heartbeat of Philippians. This is the essence of koinonia. This is the pulse of the Gospel itself.

IV. My Definition

- Paul is painting a picture of the path that we get to follow. It's a picture of imperfect people being able to be useful to a perfect God. In Him we find purpose, we uncover meaning, and we discover contentment (some would call it joy). This is a result of the exchange of our old life for Christ's life in us.
- Paul is clarifying for us what fellowship, unity, and purpose are. These traits are lived out, each day, and they reveal to others the magnitude of God's grace and compassion toward us.
- Paul does this with a powerful statement. One that we should take to heart.
- **Philippians 1:21 CSB**
For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

- In this short statement, many might make it a bumper sticker, Paul is declaring his identity. He is saying, “My life is no longer mine. My identity, purpose, and courage aren’t mine. Christ is my life.”
- Before Paul begins to talk about our attitudes and actions, before he addresses community, Paul points out his identity.
- Something I have learned is that who can’t stand in principle and purpose if you don’t know **who** you are. You won’t be able to find the strength and support you need if you try it on your own. You need to know **whose** you are. You cannot walk in unity if you’re still trying to define yourself by your circumstances.
- Paul’s identity was Christ. His life, purpose, and meaning came from his bond with Jesus. Jesus was Lord and Paul lived to serve others but pointing them to the truth of God’s love and the Gospel.
- When Jesus Christ becomes our life, something happens. You first recognize it when your flaws and imperfections become the things God uses to minister to others. Like the waterpot, your cracks are not a source of shame. They are what God uses to water others and create beauty around you.

V. My Walk

- As I continue to look at the life of Paul, I have learned that he was very open and honest about his struggles. Circumstances never defined him; it was his relationship with Jesus that did.
- In the next several sentences of this letter to believers in Philippi (verses 22-26), Paul spoke about the internal battle he faced. As a disciple of Jesus, he longed to be with his master. He wanted to sit in the presence of his Lord and Savior. But Paul understood that there was some unfinished business for him to do. And that required Paul to continue to point others to Jesus through his life and work on Earth.
- When Paul says, “To live is Christ,” he’s not giving us a slogan to memorize — he’s giving us a center to stand on. A shared identity. A shared anchor. A shared life. That’s where koinonia begins. That’s where unity takes root. That’s where courage is born. Christ becomes our life, and suddenly our cracks aren’t liabilities — they’re places where His strength flows through us.
- What Jesus has done for us (The Great Exchange) doesn’t just change our identity — it changes the way that we live. This turns the focus from individual (self) to community. We step out of doing life by ourselves to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with others, living our faith each day. Walking with strength and courage because our faith and story are lived out for others to see.
- Paul says something that I truly connect with. It points to the foundation of ministry throughout my life.
- **Philippians 1:27-28 CSB**
27 Just one thing: As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that

you are standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together for the faith of the gospel, 28 not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of destruction for them, but of your salvation—and this is from God.

- Believers must understand that our citizenship is not only earthly but also heavenly, giving us a unique perspective and responsibility in both realms.
- Because of our dual citizenship we have a responsibility ... to live and walk in a manner that honors God and reveals the message of the Gospel to those around us. Too often, we see outreach and the mission field as “out there” when the truth is that our light shines on those who we deal with on an everyday basis.
- If you think about what Paul is saying, then you can see there is a natural progression to this message of citizenship and living “worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Let me explain ...
- We have just read Paul saying, ““Live your life worthy of the gospel... stand firm... strive together... with one mind.” This is the external call — the visible life of unity, courage, and Gospel-shaped living.
- Paul wrote to the Colossians, “*Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.*” **(Colossians 3:1-2 NLT).**
- This is the internal engine behind the external call. You can’t live worthy of the Gospel.
- if your mind is focused on earthly noise. You can’t stand firm if your focus is scattered. You can’t work together (in community) if your attention is divided. You can’t contend for the faith if your thoughts are anchored to fear, politics, culture, or circumstances.
- What Paul wrote to the Colossians is the mental posture that produces the lifestyle that he is speaking about to the Philippians.
- And there is a result ... “*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ’s behalf, “Be reconciled to God.”*” **(2 Corinthians 5:20 CSB).**
- When our minds are set on Christ (Col. 3:2), our lives begin to reflect Christ (Phil. 1:27), and our witness begins to represent Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). That’s the progression of koinonia — a shared mind, a shared life, and a shared mission.

VI. My Path

- Paul now turns to the part of the Christian life we don’t like to talk about —the part we often try to avoid, deny, or pray away: Suffering. But Paul doesn’t treat suffering as a setback. He treats it as a shared grace — a place where Christ is magnified and the church is unified.
- **Philippians 1:29-30 CSB**

29 For it has been granted to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are engaged in the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I have.

- Paul closes this section by taking us into a part of the Christian life we rarely choose but inevitably face — suffering. Yet he refuses to treat suffering as a detour or a defeat. Instead, he reframes it as a shared grace, a place where Christ is magnified and the church is unified. When he says, “Don’t be frightened in any way by your opponents,” he’s using a word that describes a startled horse bolting in fear. Paul is telling the church: don’t scatter, don’t panic, don’t run — stand your ground together. And then he says something even more shocking: “It has been granted to you... to suffer for Him.” The word “granted” comes from the root of grace. Paul is literally saying that suffering for Christ is a grace gift — not because pain is good, but because Christ meets us in it, shapes us through it, and reveals Himself to the world by it.
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- And Paul doesn’t leave them alone in this. He says, “You are engaged in the same struggle you saw I had.” In other words: you’re not suffering in isolation — you’re sharing in the same story, the same mission, the same grace. This is *koinonia* at its deepest level: shared life, shared courage, shared struggle. When believers suffer together, fear loses its grip and courage rises. When one believer stands firm, others find strength. When one believer endures faithfully, others find hope. Our suffering becomes a witness — a sign to the world that our faith is real and our salvation is sure. And in that shared struggle, the Great Exchange becomes visible: Christ takes our weakness and gives us His strength; He takes our fear and gives us His courage; He takes our suffering and fills it with His presence. This is how the church becomes unbreakable — not by avoiding suffering, but by walking through it together.

VII. Wrapping Up

- So as Paul brings this section of his letter to a close, he’s not simply giving the Philippians a list of spiritual ideals — he’s giving them a vision of the kind of community the Gospel creates. A community where Christ is our life, where unity is our calling, where courage is our posture, and where suffering is not a sign of defeat but a place where grace becomes visible. A community where no one stands alone, no one fights alone, no one suffers alone, and no one contends alone. A community where the Great Exchange is not just a doctrine we believe, but a life we share — Christ’s life flowing through cracked vessels, watering the path for someone else.
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- This is the invitation Paul extends to us today.
- To be a people who live worthy of the Gospel — not by perfection, but by participation. To be a person who stand firm — not in our strength, but in shared strength. To be a people who strive side by side — not for our agendas, but for the

faith of the Gospel. To be a people who suffer well — not because suffering is easy, but because Christ is near and His people are with us. To be a people whose unity is so deep, whose courage is so steady, whose hope is so unshakeable, that the world cannot help but see Christ in us.

- This is the heart of Philippians.
- This is the heart of koinonia.
- This is the heart of the Gospel.
- So, as we step into a world filled with noise, fear, division, and uncertainty, may we be the kind of community Paul envisioned — a community anchored in Christ, united in purpose, courageous in suffering, and faithful in contending for the faith together. A community where our cracks don't disqualify us but become the very places where Christ's life flows out.
- Let's pray.
- Grace First, Grace Always