

November 10, 2024: Jesus Wins!

In Philippians 2, Paul urges believers to be “like-minded” and to value others above themselves. How can we practice humility and express our unity in Christ, even if our candidate(s) of choice didn’t win? How can we express unity if our candidate(s) did win?

Scripture Reading: Philippians 2: 1-11

1. Now that the Presidential election is past, how are you doing? Are you seeking to maintain peace in your soul?
2. How can Christ-followers embody the spirit of unity in the bond of peace?
3. In Christ Jesus, we all win, and no one loses. Jesus wasn’t the winner because he vanquished all of his foes. According to Philippians, Jesus was and is the winner because he humbled himself in the form of a servant. How can we do the same? What does humility really look like?
4. Can you think of a time in your life when choosing humility helped overcome a conflict or misunderstanding with someone else? Did everyone involved in the conflict win?
5. Because Jesus humbled himself, God elevated Jesus and gave him the name above every name in heaven and on earth. How can we keep our focus upon Jesus and not upon a political party or candidate?

6. What does it mean to you personally that “every knee will bow” and “every tongue confess” that Jesus is Lord? How does the assurance of Jesus’ victory give you confidence in your faith journey?
7. How does knowing that “Jesus Wins!” impact the way you approach challenges in relationships or even within your community?
8. How can we maintain an eternal focus upon Jesus’ Resurrection and victory over death, even in turbulent times?

November 3, 2024: Polarization

Scripture Reading: John 4: 4-42

1. Why was it significant that Jesus, a Jewish man, spoke to the Samaritan woman?
2. What does this encounter teach us about breaking down walls and building bridges?
3. What can we learn from Jesus' approach to the Samaritan woman about how to approach people who are different from us?
4. How did Jesus address her with both grace and truth?
5. Jesus offered the Samaritan woman "living water." What might "living water" represent in our lives today?
6. How can sharing this "living water" help in building bridges with others who may feel isolated or marginalized?
7. How did the Samaritan's encounter with Jesus change her perspective and actions?
8. What impact did it have on her community? How can one's transformation be a bridge to change in a larger group?
9. How can we speak truth in love while maintaining respect and openness?
10. How can our church be more intentional about building bridges with those who feel excluded or overlooked?

October 27, 2024: Us and Them

While we live in a world of division, conflict, and polarization, followers of Jesus are called to live with reconciliation and love. We are given the freedom and opportunity to build bridges in the church and in our world.

Scripture Reading: Luke 18:11-14

1. Do you think our culture is more divided today than in previous times? Why or why not?
2. Can you think of a time when you were in the middle of a conflict between two “sides”? How did you respond?
3. Do you think that pursuing unity is more difficult than division?
4. In today’s passage, Jesus tells a parable about two people: a Pharisee and a tax collector. Why were tax collectors seen as *sinner*s in the eyes of devout Jews?
5. To whom did Jesus tell this story? How does this shape your understanding of the passage?
6. Have you ever noticed Christ-followers being self-righteous and looking down at other people *with contempt*? If so, why do you think this happened?
7. How does this parable relate to other interactions that Jesus had with Pharisees?

8. Have you ever been criticized for being part of a certain group? How did you respond? What feelings did it cause within you?
9. Jesus was criticized for welcoming sinners (Luke 15:2). How can the church today welcome sinners in ways that allow them (i.e. *us*) to taste and see the goodness of God?

October 20, 2024: Building Bridges

While we live in a world of division, conflict, and polarization, followers of Jesus are called to live with reconciliation and love. Because Jesus is our peace, the one who tore down the dividing wall of hostility, we are given the freedom and opportunity to build bridges in our world.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 2:11-18

Optional Reading: Luke 10:30-37 (Parable of the Good Samaritan)

1. Ephesians 2:14 speaks of Christ as our peace who has “made the two groups one and has destroyed the dividing wall of hostility.” Who were these two groups, and what kind of barriers did they have?
2. How do you see these types of barriers (cultural, social, racial) manifesting themselves in the world today?
3. Can you recall a time when you felt separated from others, either through cultural differences, misunderstandings, or personal conflict? How did that impact you?
4. What are some barriers in your life that you feel God is calling you to break down?
5. How does Christ’s work on the cross serve as a “bridge” between us and God, between us and others?

6. How does the peace that Christ offers challenge our attitudes toward those who are different from us?
7. In what ways might building bridges be costly or difficult? How can we rely on God's strength in those moments?
8. What are some practical steps you can take to build bridges in our community, church, and workplace?
9. What would it look like for our church to actively break down walls of division and build bridges in our community?