

[OPENING SLIDE]

*"Living Up by Leaning In"*

*"[Therefore] complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord ..."*

**Introduction**

With all of the hype over the roster moves that the Boston Celtics made in the offseason, fans will once again be clamoring for what took place in the 2008 season, when the Celtics won the NBA championship. It was not looking good until Doc Rivers united his struggling team around the theme: [SLIDE # 2] *ubuntu*.

*Ubuntu*, as author Travis Scholl defines it, is a traditional African concept "that personhood is most deeply realized in community ... expressed in communal welfare, mutual high regard, unmitigated hospitality, and teamwork. It is expressed in the simple maxim: 'I am what I am because of who we all are.'" (CJ, 34:3, 149)

It is a profound analogy of the Church! Where, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> of our series on the pillars of discipleship – we come to the 2<sup>nd</sup> leg of our stool: living IN.

**Central Thought: Using Paul's letter to the Philippians as our backdrop, the apostle goes straight "to the heart of the matter—or better, to the *mind* of the matter, [presenting] the mind of Christ, and with it, the attitude" that reflects a life lived IN** (Adapted from Nadasdy, *CPR*, 6:4, 24)

Let this Pentecost people of God so possess this mind of Christ, one informed and built up by each other's presence, so giving witness in Jesus' name.

[SLIDE # 3]

I AM WHAT I AM BECAUSE OF WHAT WE ALL ARE!  
WE ARE WHO WE ALL ARE BECAUSE OF WHO CHRIST IS!

Amen.

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Philippi: a cosmopolitan city ... a people of various backgrounds and walks of life ... not unlike the body of Christ – universal and local. Not unlike Trinity!

Where, as we noted last week, everything flows south, in a vertical relationship established by our heavenly Father – a life IN, like UP, begins, continues *and* ends with Christ:

<sup>1</sup>**So** (that is, on the basis of what was stated in the previous chapter) **if** (assuming<sup>1</sup>) **there is any encouragement in** (being “called alongside of” - “united with”<sup>2</sup>) **in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation** (κοινωνία – fellowship, partnership, unity) **in the** (Holy) **Spirit** (“called alongside of” you), **any affection and sympathy** (mercy, compassion – “blest be the tie that binds”<sup>3</sup>) ...

[SLIDE # 4] To be “in Christ” = to be brought – by grace, through faith – into the Father’s saving presence. To be “in Christ” is to be on the receiving end the benefits and fruits that God pours forth from the storehouses of heaven.

The impetus for IN is UP. Where, our IN flows from 1. Encouragement *in Christ*; 2. *His love* that bends down and pours itself into our lives; 3. Fellowship *of the Spirit*, who “fills, seals, empowers, gifts, cleanses, enables, prays” (Notes, LWML Sunday, 1996); 4. *His affection*, compassion and sympathy.

Consolation ... Comfort ... Community ... Compassion. These are who we are. These are those core values for which we strive ... in which we become complete, as in a ...

[SLIDE # 5]

I AM WHAT I AM BECAUSE OF WHAT WE ALL ARE!

... sort of way.

<sup>2</sup>**Complete** (fulfill) **my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord** (“of a common soul” – like unto “one cake”<sup>4</sup>) **and of one mind** (“being one in spirit and purpose” – NIV).

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<sup>1</sup> “The conditional clauses in these verses indicate certainties, not ‘maybes.’” (NSB, 2000)

<sup>2</sup> παρακλησις; in the Roman understanding a *paracletos* was one who had your back, as Romans often fought the enemy in this position – back to back with another, for protection.

<sup>3</sup> “The Greek term means compassionate desires that develop in response to a situation and that stimulate a person to meet recognized needs in that situation.” (NSB, 2000); these are not “a lifeless abstraction or an intellectual exercise, but something which involved the deepest welling of emotion within us, our heart and soul.” (Sermon Studies on the Epistles (A), 327)

<sup>4</sup> Luther, 30:67; also 23:149, note 109

It's a unity of not just thought, but of feeling and action! As when ... "*brothers (and sisters) dwell together in unity.*" (Psalm 133:1)

[SLIDE # 6] Of course, that doesn't just happen on its own? In fact, there is much to war against it. Like the story I shared a few weeks back about how the mother church of the church I served in New Orleans didn't like that the daughter church they planted was growing, and had "stolen" their Pastor. So, they stealthily came over on Thanksgiving Eve and changed all the locks on the door of the church so that the folks couldn't worship on Thanksgiving Day!

"Unity unappreciated and undervalued is unity soon to be lost." Where, there is no greater offense to the *unbelieving* world than when professing Christians are at war with one another, but conversely, there is no better testimony that the Spirit is at work among us than when we live in harmony. Children of God, appreciate the unity we enjoy! It is God's gift. (Adapted from *Sermon Studies on the Epistles (A)*, 327, 32)

[SLIDE # 7] Yet, the IN life of a congregation has to be cultivated, nurtured, fed; and, when broken, its loss needs to be confessed, forgiven and healed. Where, to live IN comes about only as we continue to spend time together in His Word, praying together, celebrating who we are as baptized and redeemed children, meeting each other regularly – horizontally – at His Table. Where, the more we lose our self, the more we become more like him. (Adapted from Nadasdy, 26)

Only then, is the Holy Spirit's ideal fulfilled as we ...

**<sup>3</sup>Do nothing from rivalry** (selfish ambition – "the grasping attitudes which sees everything in terms of gain or loss for oneself, and which always asks, 'What's in it for me?'"<sup>5</sup>) **or conceit** (i.e. "empty pride, or groundless self-esteem"<sup>6</sup>) **but in humility** (a rare commodity in both Paul's and our day) **count** (esteem) **others more significant than yourselves.**

I once stepped into a preschool room to deliver a message to a preschool teacher. Observing one of the kids talking on a plastic telephone, I asked him, "Hey, are you trying to call me?" To which he responded, "No, I'm talking to my mom!"

Or like the poem by Shel Silverstein called "Senses" (*Light in the Attic*):

A Mouth was talking to a Nose and an Eye.  
A passing listening Ear Said,

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<sup>5</sup> *Sermon Studies on the Gospels (A)*, 328; "a greedy attempt to gain the upper hand"

<sup>6</sup> Notes, LWML Sunday, 1996, unknown author.

"Pardon me, but you spoke too loud, I couldn't help but overhear."  
But the Mouth just closed and the Nose turned up  
And the Eye just looked away,  
And the Ear with nothing more to hear  
Went sadly on its way.

**[SLIDE # 8]** What are the mortal enemies of our striving to live IN? Far too often it's looking at ourselves - particularly in the light of others, potentially yielding one of two sins: walking away from the encounter either thinking ourselves *better than* another, or, thinking ourselves *beneath* another.

Child of God, humility never says "I am better than you. And humility never says, 'I am absolutely worthless; I have no gifts, no abilities which could possibly help anyone.'" Unbelief says that. Forgetting our Savior's blood-bought redemption does that. Satan says that. Where, in Christ, all are equal in His redemption and grace. All are called to the same higher calling.

Therefore ...

**<sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who <sup>6</sup>who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped (seized, presumed upon, held onto as if by right), <sup>7</sup>but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup>And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup>Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name,<sup>10</sup> So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father ...**

**[SLIDE # 9]**

**WE ARE WHO WE ALL ARE BECAUSE OF WHO CHRIST IS!**

We are who we all are because of what He has done for us all – crucified and raised for our forgiveness and salvation! Where, the more He/His life is poured into us, the less there will be of me. That as we are filled by His forgiveness and grace, the less room there is for my selfish sinful self. "And the less of that, the more God's Spirit shapes me, so also the heart and mind within. (Nadasdy, 25)

And so, what does living IN look like in real time? What change(s) come about by the Spirit's "*filling, sealing, empowering, gifting, cleansing and praying*" for us?

[SLIDE # 10] <sup>14</sup>**Do all things without grumbling** (complaining) *or* questioning (arguing, disputing) <sup>15</sup>**that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish** ("anything that is fit to be offered as a sacrifice to God ... untainted by sin"<sup>7</sup>) ...

[SECOND] *In the midst of a crooked and twisted* (depraved, perverse) *generation, among whom you shine as lights* (stars) **in the world,** <sup>16</sup>**holding fast** (and forth) **to the word of life** (i.e. Christ), **so that in the day of Christ I may be proud** ("that I may boast, or rejoice") **that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.**

[THIRD] Take time, as Paul does, to rejoice in what we share ... brothers/sisters in this place:

<sup>17</sup>*Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of* (or, "coming from") *your faith,* **I am glad and rejoice with you all.** <sup>18</sup>**Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.**

[SLIDE # 11] All the while, joining me in prayer for this congregation, its mission – to be of one heart and soul ("one cake"), as we seek, by God's grace, to build community, and to bless others in Jesus' name. Then, God would be glorified [UP], a congregation [IN] will be blessed, and a community [OUT] would be served.

### Conclusion

*"There is so much blessing and joy even in a single encounter of brother with brother,"* Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote in *Life Together*. *"How inexhaustible are the riches that open up for those who by God's will are privileged to live in the daily fellowship of life with other Christians!"* (20)

May we be bold and courageous to live IN. But more, may we be bold and courageous to follow *Christ* ... whereby living UP, we live IN, leaning into Him and to one another in service and love.

[SLIDE # 12]

I AM WHAT I AM BECAUSE OF WHAT WE ALL ARE!  
WE ARE WHO WE ALL ARE BECAUSE OF WHO CHRIST IS!

*Ubuntu. Amen.*

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<sup>7</sup> NSB, 2002

*[Friday E-mail:]* A while back, I met a woman by the name of Nancy. She was the roommate of someone I was visiting in the hospital. Where, as I was sharing a Scripture and prayer with the member I was visiting, I would hear an occasional "Amen," or "That's so nice" from the other side of the curtain. So after visiting with my member – as is my practice anyway – I introduced myself to Nancy, sharing a Word and blessing with her as well.

She went on to share with me that she was a member of one of the local congregations in town, and how blessed she was by her church. Inquiring as to why she had such high praise for her congregation, she said it was the **fellowship** they shared. Where, ever since her illness, there had been no shortage of care by the members of her church. Her face beamed as she went on to tell me how her refrigerator was already stocked with meals folks had prepared for when she returned home, and how they came to visit her. She couldn't stop glowing about how much they *"loved one another."* It is a prime example of what living IN.

The biblical word for it is *koinonia* ... "fellowship ... life together." Its basic meaning in the Greek means a close "sharing ... or participation in common things." Where, Biblically, there is both a vertical dimension of such a thing, as well as a horizontal one. Fellowship or life together with God through Jesus and His death and resurrection [vertical/UP], which is expressed in our life together as God's people [horizontally/IN]. It's something to which our heavenly Father calls us, all the while demonstrating it in a profound way when He sent His one and only Son, *"who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*

I invite you to explore this glorious concept with me this Sunday, as we consider the 2<sup>nd</sup> leg of our stool – living IN. Using **Philippians 2** as our backdrop, Paul invites us once again to reconsider, and to give thanks for, the fellowship and sharing we have both with Him ... and one another.

Wherein, would that all of Christ's people be filled with *κοινωνία*, of such a witness, mercy and life together. As for Nancy's congregation, who wouldn't want to be a member of a church like that? Yes, could it be that we might enjoy such sweet fellowship together – Pastor/people in partnership for the Gospel. Maybe we do. What do you think? SYOS