

## In Tune

Not too long ago, my 5 year old daughter and I entered a three legged race. She joined me for one of our family events and we were partnered together to run around a cone bound together by a chord around our ankles. She was not sure about this so I tried to hype it up to her saying “it would be fun” and so forth, but the competitive side of me was like, “oh man” this is going to be so hard. She is like half my height and there is no way we can run together. I saw us falling behind the other more closely matched teams.

It can be hard, can't it, to keep in step with one other? This morning, Paul is talking to the church in Colosse who is struggling to be in tune. The city of Colossae had a long history of greatness. It was situated in the Lycus River valley about 100 miles from Ephesus, along with two other cities Laodicea and Hierapolis. Each of these three cities was a great city at one time and Colossae had at one time been the greatest of the three. It had been a wealthy city, with a profitable market in purple cloth. But over the years this once great city had become a smaller, less important city. Perhaps their memory of being great made it that much harder to live out this new community in Christ, the church.

In any case, the Colossians were struggling to remember what foundation their community was built on. We don't know exactly what the Colossian "heresy" was, just that it existed. We also know that they, like us, had problems. Sexual promiscuity, impurity, lust, doing whatever you feel like whenever you feel like it, grabbing whatever attracts your fancy. Bad tempers and irritability, meanness, profanity, dirty talk and lying.

It would be easy to judge them and distance ourselves from the Christians in Colossae, but we also have problems living in step with one another, don't we? In the midst of a pandemic year, in 2020 and now 2021 we have seen how difficult it can be to live in our own homes with one another when we can't go out. Our how difficult it is to live with our neighbors when they have opposing political views. We have experienced the "out of stepness" with our children, our aunts, our parents, our friends." We have divided ourselves into a million categories, right and left, vaccinated and anti-vax, older, younger, church go-er, church avoider.

The Colossians had their categories too; Jewish, non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilized and uncouth, slave and free, but Paul tells the church in Colossae that the new reality of their life together is that they are no longer defined by these markers of identity, "everyone is defined by Christ."

Let me ask you this morning, Maplewood Presbyterian Church, what defines you? What defines your individual life, but what defines your common life together. It is easy to let other things define us besides Christ. Often we read these words to the church in Colossae “Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved” and they land a little bit like clothes that we don’t quite fit in yet. That I would be chosen? That you would be chosen? That we would be called holy! That we would be dearly loved!

It is scandalous. We know it is, we know that we don’t deserve the label “holy” and so we prefer to hide behind a different identity. But Paul says to you and to me this morning, that if we claim Jesus as Lord, if we the church claim that everyone is defined by Christ, holy, chosen and dearly loved are in fact our new reality.

The Good News of the Gospel is that in Jesus Christ, we who were out of step with God and with one another have been made **“in tune.”** From the very first pages of the Bible we see that we humans were created for communion with God and with one another, all the way back in Genesis 3. The first time that humankind hides God asks a beautiful question “Where are you?”

You see friends, this is love, not that we sought and looked for God, but that God came to us in the person of Jesus Christ. This is love, that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. This is love, that God choose not the strong but the weak and foolish and clothed us in his holiness.

Do you see yourself the way that God sees you today? Do you see the one sitting next to you in the pew that way? Do you see your neighbor, your mother, the talking heads on TV that way?

Paul says “Let the Peace of Christ keep you in tune with one another.” The peace of Christ is more than just a blessing we say to one another when we gather together. The Peace of Christ was costly, it cost God, God’s son Jesus. The Peace of Christ is not a warm fuzzy feeling, it is a person. The peace of Christ knit back together a broken humanity, hiding from their maker. The peace of Christ seeks us out when we are naked and afraid. The Prince of Peace, Jesus, created a new community not bound together by ideology, politics, economics or any other marker or identity former, but bound together by Jesus himself. It is as if we are a child, tied to the leg of our Father, able to run the three legged race of life with the most beautiful legs to ever run. We know are in the race of our lives, with one who loves us and defines our very walk and gait, keeping us in tune with one another.

## Charge and Benediction

Maplewood Presbyterian Church, you are chosen by God for this new life of love. Let all the other ways that we are separated from each other, fall under the rule of Christ.

May God Bless you and Keep you, may God send us out on mission, full of the Holy Spirit and full of power, humble before God and courageous in front of one another.