

Date: August 1, 2021

Title: "Another Way of Living: Together"

Scripture: Philippians 2:1-5

Hello Everyone! Distributing these sermon notes were done as we entered into a time of separation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 situation is ever evolving, but we have been able to come back together to meet together again in the church building and we think we will be able continue doing so going forward. This is the last message in this series, it is also the last set of sermon notes that is being mailed out for now. We are going to work on new ways of reaching out to all members of our congregation, but I'll say more about this at the end of the notes. For now, please enjoy these notes about "Another Way of Living: Together".

I. Introduction

We have been working our way through a number of the core concepts that the Church of the Brethren holds dear by looking at the denominational tagline "Another Way of Living - Continuing the Work of Jesus Christ: Peacefully, Simply, Together. This week we focus on that idea of "together".

II. Why Together?

- The early Brethren sought out biblical basis for all aspects of Christian life. The idea Christian life being a joint effort is woven throughout the Bible.
- It's found in today scripture:
2 ¹If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. ⁴ Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others.
⁵ Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus
Philippians 2:1-5 (CSB)
- The Philippians, just being told they would suffer in the previous verses were told to do so showing mercy, love, unity and humility with their intent to serve each other. 'Together' is the way of Christianity.

III. How?

- The Christians of the time had two words for the type of community they shared
- "Gemeinde" is the community that is held within a single church. The community of a local neighborhood of Christians working together. The Mennonite church adopted this word for their individual churches
- "Gemeinschaft" is the more Brethren of these two old German words. It refugees to the whole Church community. It means whichever church you go to, you are a member of Christ's body and we support each other.

IV. Not So Together

- Even in Paul's day however, the church did not always function as one body. Christ tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves, but instead we sometimes end up tearing each other down. He speaks to this in Galatians 5:13-15:

¹³ You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. ¹⁴ For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁵ If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.

- Christianity is a religion of doing, not of rules. It’s a religion where the focus is not on obeying a set of strict commandments but of caring for each other however it needs to be done. This can be seen in James 2:15-17:

¹⁵ If a brother or sister is without clothes and lacks daily food ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, stay warm, and be well fed,” but you don’t give them what the body needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself.

- We are not saved by works, but when we are saved, and radically transformed, we are made for working together to transform the world around us. Transforming works will happen when we focus not on serving ourselves but serving one another.

V. “One Another”

- This term appears at least 100 times in the New Testament. Here is a small sampling:

Accept (or welcome) one another (*Romans 15:7*)

Admonish one another (*Romans 15:14; Colossians 3:16*)

Be at peace with one other (*Mark 9:50*)

Be devoted to one another in love (*Romans 12:10*)

Bear (or carry) one another's burdens (*Galatians 6:2*)

Bear (or be tolerant) with one another (*Colossians 3:13*)

Be kind and compassionate to one another (*Ephesians 4:32*)

Be patient with one another (*Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13*)

Be likeminded towards one another (*Romans 15:5*)

Build up (or edify) one another (*Romans 14:19; 1 Thessalonians 5:11*)

Care (or have equal concern) for one another (*1 Corinthians 12:25*)

Clothe yourselves with humility towards one another (*1 Peter 5:5*)

Comfort one another (*1 Thessalonians 4:18*)

Confess your faults (sins) to one another (*James 5:16*)

Consider one another better than yourselves (*Philippians 2:3*)

Employ the gifts that God has given us for the benefit of one another (*1 Peter 4:10*)

Encourage one another (*1 Thessalonians 4:18 and 5:11*)

Exhort one another (*Hebrews 3:13*)

Forgive one another (*Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13*)

Greet one another with a holy kiss (*Romans 16:16; 2 Corinthians 13:12*)

Honor (be devoted to, be kind to) one another above yourselves (*Romans 12:10*)

In humility consider one another better than yourselves (*Philippians 2:3*)

Live in harmony with one another (*Romans 12:16*)

Look to the interests of one another (*Philippians 2:4*)

Love one another (*John 13:34 and at least 15 other times*)

Pray for one another (*James 5:16*)

Serve one another (*Galatians 5:13*)

Show (offer) hospitality to one another (*1 Peter 4:9*)

Speak the truth in love to one another (*Ephesians 4:25*)

Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (*Ephesians 5:19*)

Submit to one another (*Ephesians 5:21*)

Teach (instruct) one another (*Colossians 3:16; Romans 15:14*)

Stir up (spur) one another to love and good works (*Hebrews 10:24*)

Teach one another (*Colossians 3:16*)

Wash one another's feet (*John 13:14*)

When you come together to eat, wait for one another (*1 Corinthians 11:33*)

VI. It's a You, Yous, Yall, Yuns (yinz) Issue

- English tries very hard to match the Greek plural pronoun for You, but it always comes back down in our minds as You (singular) in our minds.
- One perfect example of that is in 1 Cor 6:19: "Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own". We hear that and think "I am the temple", but "you" and "Your" are not singular here. You (THE CHURCH) are the temple. You (THE CHURCH) are not your own. This is something that takes some thought before the implications fully sink in. It makes the warning given to the Galatians all the more vital.

VII. Allelon - One Another

- Every one of those One Another verses mentioned above uses the word Allelon (al - LAY- lone)
- It's a pronoun like she, he, they, them, we and us, but it's different from our pronouns because it has a meaning beyond the individual or even a group.
- It is reciprocal. It is mutual. It isn't about you or me, or even one or another, or each but about doing an action towards each other. So our Bibles translate it as the joint words "one another".
- It ties the action of the concept with the idea of mutual action to each other. Try replacing "One Another" with the words "You (mutually)" and you will begin to understand what is said in these verses and in why the early Brethren saw this idea of togetherness as so important.

VIII. Core Together Brethren Activities

- This is why we do activities that draw us together
 1. District and Annual conferences
 - a) We work together to understand scripture.
 - b) Questions we can't answer on our own, we bring to the district.
 - c) Questions which the district can't help resource, we bring to the Annual Conference.
 - d) Annual conference seeks input from the global Brethren body and works to come to an agreed upon answer that is voted upon for adoption at a later conference
 2. Global missions, working together with the global church
The Church of the Brethren has 11 registered denominations around the world. These locations include the USA, Haiti, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, Brazil, Spain, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Uganda and India.
 3. Love feast & communion
Our services together are not because we are servants, but we do these things to remind us how to be servants.
 4. Anointing and prayer

Praying for each other and holding anointing services before surgeries, big life changes and for emotional support is one more thing that brings us together as we anoint for forgiveness of sin, strengthening of or faith and for the healing of our mind, body and spirit.

5. Agreeing Together on a Compelling Vision

The Church of the Brethren has worked together to decide what can inspire us in our service together.

“Together, as the Church of the Brethren, we will passionately live and share the radical transformation and holistic peace of Jesus Christ through relationship-based neighborhood engagement. To move us forward, we will develop a culture of calling and equipping disciples who are innovative, adaptable, and fearless.”

Next week we will focus on this compelling vision. Though there won't be sermon notes available, we are going to work on new ways of reaching out to all members of our congregation. Right now these include Facebook and the website, but also we can look at providing CDs and players or maybe some other idea will come forward - or if these notes we had during the Covid-19 separation are really missed, we may bring them back. If you would like to share any thoughts, ideas or requests, please reach out to Pastor Brian at 330-887-2283 or leave a message at the church number 419-281-0463.

-Pastor Brian