

PASTOR GREG – SERMON
1.10.2023

HUMILITY. Who are we? Who do we want to be? What do we want to be known for? Let us pray.

VISION. Isn't wonderful being a member of St John's Lutheran Congregation? Isn't wonderful being a member of Faith Lutheran Church North Bundaberg? Isn't it wonderful being a follower of Jesus Christ. Because we have been united in Christ through our baptism we have great encouragement from him and from our Heavenly Father – each and every day. Every day we are comforted by his love- through the days filled with light and love and through the days filled with darkness and despair- God comforts us and we know it. Through His Word God constantly fills us with His Spirit- again and again we are filled with the Spirit of God and His love and forgiveness. And in our daily lives we share this wonderful gift. Like God we are compassionate and gracious, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ever ready to forgive. And so in our church and in our families we are together- we all have the same love for God and for each other and we are one in purpose. We do nothing out of selfish ambition rather we are on the lookout how to help our neighbours- in the church and in the family. In fact, the world knows that we are followers of Jesus Christ by the way we care for one another.

REALITY. If only this was true- not the sometimes that it is but all the time. But it is not. The apostle Paul wrote a letter to a small congregation in Philippi= in northern Greece/Macedonia. It was a Roman city which had been named after the father of Alexander the Great- who were both Macedonians. Paul had gone there to preach the good news of God and a small congregation was started. This letter is often known as a letter of joy- the word joy appears throughout it, e.g.: 1:4: *In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy...* and chapter 4: *Rejoice always, again I say it- rejoice.* But the Philippian congregation was just like every other Christian congregation since the beginning of the church- wracked by division, jealousy, greed, apathy and selfishness. We have a glimpse of this in 4:1: *I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.* And like the early congregations, we too have suffered from bitterness, envy and division. I remember in my early days here that I was speaking to Norm Zunker. He asked by how the Church Council and Elders meetings were going and I replied that both were going well. Norm got quite animated and said that that was because there was no passion. In his day there were often strong disagreements and even the threat of going outside to sort it out! How do we see each other? How often do we pray for each other? How often do we care for each other? And this struggle is ours on a personal level as well- we know what is deep in our hearts and minds- the struggle between the old evil nature and the new Christ-nature that both dwell within us causes us and those we love great pain. What do we do?

THE GOSPEL. Paul challenged and encouraged and warned Christians throughout all of his letters as indeed did our Lord Jesus Christ in his life on earth. But more than any of this Paul encouraged his listeners to focus on Jesus Christ. In our reading today he calls us to mimic the Eternal Son of God: *Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be held on to at any cost. Rather he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant and being made in human likeness and found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death even death on a cross.*

The writer to the Hebrews simply put it this way: 12:2: *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.* A few years ago four simple letters went through the Christian Church: WWJD- WHAT WOULD JESUS DO? It was to be an encouragement and a prayer that in every situation we find ourselves that we would ask and consider what Jesus would do in that situation.

All good. But never forget WDJD- WHAT DID JESUS DO? The Eternal Son of God paid the price for our rebellion, our apathy, our selfishness- our sin- and so died that terrible death on the Cross. And our response is to repent and believe the good news- that in Jesus Christ – our future is certain. Life forever in the Eternal Kingdom of God. Amen.