

Yours in Christ Jesus

A Sermon by *the Rev. Dr. Joseph David Stinson*,
Glen Ridge Congregational Church, Glen Ridge, New Jersey,
Preached on the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, (25Sept), 2011.

Text: Philippians 2:5-7

“Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” ~St. Paul

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The church in Philippi was a favorite of the Apostle. His letter brims with affection for them. Nowhere in evidence is the cantankerous Paul of Galatians. He loved Lydia and the people of this congregation in Macedonia. Though he wrote the epistle from prison, he is positively euphoric about the progress of the gospel in the church. Still, Paul had advice for them and us in the letter. Considering the ground breaking discovery about the importance of love and caring in making Christians, note Paul’s recommendation in the second chapter of the Philippian letter. Here is Dr. Peterson’s translation:

If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you *care* – then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.¹

(One wonders if this had been the church in New York City instead of Philippi, how this advice would have been received!)

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If the way Christians love one another is a major reason people come to church and faith, is it a surprise that the opposite is most often the reason people leave the church and stop practicing the faith? A few weeks I spoke to someone who dropped out of our church several years ago. I inquired about it and the person told me: “Four years ago working on a project in the church, *So-in-so* was mean to me. I was at the time quite interested in this project and this leader of the congregation told me it was not worthy of his concern or the church’s funds.” This person felt snubbed, condemned, disrespected, and she left. Sin is not just a problem in the Bowery. Sin when covered with a thin veil of religiosity can be more dangerous. We are taught from church school on that the two main tenets of Christ are to love God and to love one another. Yet, far too often we can be mean-spirited not just to a neighbor outside the church but to persons alongside us in the church.

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Yours in Christ Jesus. DOC

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Yours in Christ Jesus

A Sermon by *the Rev. Dr. Joseph David Stinson*,
Glen Ridge Congregational Church, Glen Ridge, New Jersey,
Preached on the 26th Sunday in Ordinary Time, (25Sept), 2011.

Text: Philippians 2:5-7

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The church in Philippi was a favorite of the Apostle. His letter brims with affection for them. Nowhere in evidence is the cantankerous Paul of Galatians. He loved Lydia and the people of this congregation in Macedonia. Though he wrote the epistle from prison, he is positively euphoric about the progress of the gospel in the church. Still, Paul had advice for them and us in the letter. Considering the ground breaking discovery about the importance of love and caring in making Christians, note Paul’s recommendation in the second chapter of the Philippian letter. Here is Dr. Peterson’s translation:

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