

**The Spirit Of Faithfulness”  
Stewardship Series  
One With Each Other, Part One  
Philippians 4:1-9  
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Well it has happened again. I thought it wouldn't, hoped it wouldn't, even somewhat believed that through the symmetry of the divine it couldn't but it did. The Chicago Cubs have once again been eliminated from the baseball playoffs. After 99 years of failing to win a World Series championship, that legacy will now cross the century mark. I know, I know, why has God forsaken us? Truly God has not, in fact most Cubs fans embody a true faithfulness that many of us could hope to live up too. Despite 100 years without a championship, they remain some of the most loyal followers in the country. They live with a hope and faithfulness that everything eventually will come together. Wait till next year!

Do we as Christians live with a belief that God has put all things in this world in order that they may come together? I hope we do, because it is essential to the Christian Life. Paul in his closing chapter to the church at Philippi drives that point home. In Christ we are one with each other, not just as his body the church, but to all who would listen too and seek to follow him. Paul reminds the church that their “gentleness” or their “consideration of others” be made known for the Lord is near. That spirit of faithfulness is to be made evident in all that God has called us to be.

Many times the church has forgotten these words of Paul. “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” Referencing back that the God of peace which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Remaining faithful in the spirit of God means recognizing that God has brought all things together for good.

We tend to want to take a look at our own congregation or church and think this is the way God intended it. Well Paul reminds us that we all need each other and that we all can learn from one another. The church today can should be an in some instances is and eclectic mix of people from varied backgrounds and traditions, who have come together because they share that one common dream of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Much of our best work has been done when we respect our differences and learn to use them as assets in sharing the faith.

Some of our worst moments come when there are divisions among us and when we want one thing to dominate over the other. This was true of the church in its

early days, was true in the Middle Ages and the crusades, of the schisms, and in our conquering of other cultures and lands all for the glory of God. Hopefully we have learned. As we look at Native American Sunday and all that the United Methodist church has embraced from the many cultures, it would seem that there is evidence that we have learned. Do we still need to learn? Yes we do! Can we celebrate what we have learned, yes we can. Father Marquette himself believed that in sharing of cultures there was much to be gained. His success in mission with the Natives of this region was not bourn out of might, but out of sharing. Of bringing together the best of what each culture had to offer and receiving that as a blessing from God. Seeing the virtues that Paul shared and honoring them as God truly bringing us one with each other.

That Spirit of Faithfulness must still reside with us today and I believe it can. But we also must be intentional about our faithfulness to Christ mission. One of the items I gave to my boys from my first trip to Oklahoma was a dream catcher. If your not familiar with the dream catcher, has somewhat of a legendary status now. The concept is that when you hang the dream catcher in the room, that the bad dreams get caught up in the webbing and because they themselves bring confusion, they will be confused and not know how to get through. Then when the morning sun rises, they evaporate in its rays like the dew. The good dreams which bring hope and wisdom, find their way through and glide down the feathers to the person sleeping. As we talk about stewardship and specifically how we are one with each other, we continue to pray for that common dream that God has for us, respecting our differences, but remaining united in Christ. As we approach that day, what it is that God is calling us to give as a part of that? What is your best dream? What are you willing to give of yourself to make that dream a reality in your church? I have shared some of my dreams for new staff, to revitalize our impact in our learning and in our community, and also that that Spirit of Faithfulness will be so evident that you cannot help but feel it as you walk in the doors. Let us stop worrying about every little thing and with prayer and thanksgiving let our requests be made known to God, knowing that God will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

But we also must be careful not to get comfortable. Like our Native American sisters and brothers we must tell the stories of faith so that others will know our dreams and be allowed to build and share in those dreams. To bring it back around we also should remain like those faithful Cubs fans. The church, though at times we may think we have won it all, must also live with the same spirit faithfulness, of wait till next year, for we will be even better than we were before. Working as one team, one people of faith, one with each other we can and we will for Christ Jesus. Amen.