



Refugee Week

Unity in Diversity – Sermon Outline

(Major Ben Johnson)

Philippians 2:1-12

Main Idea: Be one people, with a renewed mind, humbled ambition and shared world view.

Intro: “How to change your mind and be happy about it” could be an appropriate title for this message. The main theme of Philippians is joy, particularly amongst difficulty and suffering. Paul went through one of the most powerful transformations in Scripture when he encountered Jesus. He went from a brutal persecutor to a sacrificial servant of the Christian faith.

We live in an age when our community is heavily influenced by political slogans, scaremongering and media campaigns, and the Church is not immune to these influences. Many people who faithfully attend our churches or corps have a very narrow view of how we should receive and treat those fleeing conflict and persecution. The Salvation Army has a thoroughly biblical positional statement on refugees and asylum seekers, the latest version being released in 2016.

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/masic/positional-statements/> You are invited to consider this powerful passage as it relates to the treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum, and how we receive them as believers.

To be absolutely clear, Leviticus 19:33-34 says:

“When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.”

The Israelites were themselves refugees and God commanded them to remember it.

You are encouraged today to see beyond your world view and through culture.



Move 1) A Renewed Mind

a) Receiving others as Christ received us (v1-2)

We find forgiveness of sins and restoration to relationship through Christ and an experience of that sacrificial love. When we enjoy that communion, the manner with which we are treated so tenderly should impact the way we respond to others.

Paul's desire is that the same affection they have for him would be extended to others. This is a matter of unity only achieved through God's Spirit.

b) Learn from Paul's experience of transformation (v3, 5)

Pride is the most naked form of selfishness, which is the essence of sin (Muller). Paul was a proud, zealous and powerful persecutor of Christians. He experienced great humility through his conversion and transformation.

Paul had every right to use himself as the specimen, but instead chose to elevate Christ and His example.

Move 2) A Humbled Ambition

a) Elevate the value of others in your own sight (3, 4)

What will help elevate us in the sight of others? What will boost our ego? Reject these things in favour of lifting others up. This sacrificial attitude is part of being like-minded with Christ.

Investment in the betterment of others should be at the forefront of our minds.

b) How will we use what we have and are? (v6, 7)

Jesus had more reason than any other to exalt Himself, yet he chose humility and self-sacrifice.

Taking human form in order to share our life with His is a demonstration of His dedication to the will of the Father. He took on our world view.

Move 3) A New World View

a) Part of Jesus' act of humbling Himself (v8)

We must be clear that this is a path Jesus chose. He shared our view of the world, even to its finality, and humiliation of the worst kind of end. His punishment on the cross was the worst known to man.

b) Understanding who we are (v9-11)

The direct consequence of obedience and sacrifice is being exalted by God. This is about knowing who we really are in God's image. Paul was no stranger to being given a new name. It was not just a better name or a fresh start. It signified new life.

Understanding Jesus' example and the lengths He went to demands a powerful response of humility. "Every knee shall bow". What of our name? What do people think and say of us? How does our witness to the transforming power of Jesus affect those we meet? Would Christ describe us by our ethnicity or the demographic we represent? Not likely. We are afforded special consideration as children of God. Who are we to deny that same acceptance to those who flee to our country for safe refuge?

This kind of acceptance is what Jesus offered to the glory of God the Father. We are invited to participate in this same redeeming work.

c) Living Kingdom values (v12)

The direct consequence should be that we imitate Christ, humbling ourselves, taking on another's world view, even when we are not seen. "Work out" your salvation, carrying it to perfection out of reverence for Christ and His sacrifice.

Conclusion: To change your mind and be happy about it. Paul said in v2 "... then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind." Our natural inclination is to be comfortable and content around people that look, sound and act like us. Reading this verse through the lens of this worldwide issue gives us incredible insight into what God sees in us. He sees that we have the capacity to love beyond our cultural norms, especially when we are assured of our own value and identity in Him. We can be one, as Jesus prayed for us, "that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:21).

The manner with which you and I receive those who have been displaced from their homes is vital to God's Kingdom. We can be an integral part of their healing, restoration and finding a new sense of "home". If you are feeling uncomfortable, or this message has challenged your thinking, then I would encourage you to pray that God's Spirit would continue this work in you. If God is speaking to you about doing something more, speak with your corps officer or read up on the positional statement to help you understand what you can do. May God help us each as we "work out our salvation" along with all those He places in our path today.