

ONE HEART, ONE MIND
Hold Fast (Philippians 2:1-8, 12-16)
Rev. Hannah Coe - First Baptist Church, Jefferson City, Missouri
November 1, 2020
WATCH/LISTEN: fbcjc.org/sermon/one-heart-one-mind-hold-fast/

Our passage for today comes from Philippians chapter 2. I've decided to read today's passage throughout the message. One of the first things that jumped out at me from this passage, the phrase "hold fast" in verse 16—"hold fast to the word of life."

The days on either side of this Sunday are full of pre-election scurry. Campaign ads, robo calls, Facebook rants are accelerating all around us. So, holding fast, even as a spiritual discipline, feels important. In fact, over in Ephesians 4, the writer says that part of growing up in Christ is no longer being tossed about by the winds of current events—the winds of politics, trending news stories, whatever the latest catastrophe is. It's so easy to get swept up, to be tossed about by all that's going on right now. So this morning, I want us to pause, to take a deep breath, and to prayerfully ask ourselves what we are holding and what is holding us. What is it we are holding and what is holding us.

When it became clear on October 21st that David and I probably had the coronavirus, I started thinking a lot about holding fast. I felt led to set some boundaries, to choose what I'd hold fast to in my mind and heart for the next few weeks. Maybe you're in that place right now too, setting some boundaries—deciding what you're going to hold in your mind and heart. It's no secret that the virus numbers in our community are not looking great and more and more of us are being notified of exposure or testing positive for the virus. This causes all kinds of stress and re-evaluation even as we try prepare for winter, not knowing exactly how things are going to go.

This week, as we walked in the rain on one of our favorite trails, (slide with roots pic) I noticed how several of the trees along the creek have these beautiful and prominent exposed roots which gives this glimpse of these mighty root systems holding these trees upright.

This is the kind of holding fast Paul is talking about in Philippians 2. Fully and completely rooting our lives, holding fast, to Christ and Christ alone.

You see this was the thing for the Philippians. There were all kinds of other doctrines and practices and perspectives Paul observed them clinging to, being possessed by, tossing them about like the wind and the waves.

Paul's encouragement for the Philippians and for us is to be so rooted in Christ, of the same mind and spirit and love of Christ that we can make some tough choices. The kind of choices Jesus made.

Hear these words from Philippians 2

Imitating Christ's Humility

2 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ² make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was ^[a] in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,

⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

Holding fast, being of one mind with Christ frees us to let things go that are pretty hard to let go of. Things like autonomy, power, status, achievements.

When we let go of these things, there is room for God to grow in us things like (slide—holding fast):

- Humility—which is not thinking less of ourselves, but thinking of ourselves less
 - Practicing gratitude
- being FOR others and taking that a step further—FOR the other
- even something as extreme as full and utter obedience to God which is full and utter obedience to love.
 - Choosing not to be overtaken by fear but instead ruled by love; to ultimately settle on the side of love in our thoughts and feelings

(take down slide)

Holding fast is only half of the Greek translation as is true of so many Greek words. The other way to translate this phrase is “hold forward”; whereas hold fast is somewhat focused on our personal devotion, “hold forward” is focused on what we’re offering to each other, or the fruit of being rooted in Christ.

This is really important because there are a lot of things that aren’t going to change this week. After this week’s election, there are still going to be people who are living in poverty, people who are lonely, people who feel invisible, people who are at-risk this winter; and what’s gonna matter more for hurting people just as much as who’s in the White House is that Christ-followers act like Christ.

Regardless of what happens this week or this winter, Christians will have a responsibility to hold forward, to live the message of hope, resurrection, forgiveness of sins—the message of Christ.

Paul talks over and over again in Philippians about being of one mind, one Spirit, one love which is something that, if we're honest, makes Baptists really uncomfortable. Cause we like to think for ourselves. And then, when there's a group of us who think differently from another group, we like to leave and start a new church.

Being of the same of mind does not mean we think the same. It means we seek to truly understand what the other person thinks, what the other political party, what the other side of the social issue, what the opposing side thinks—where they're coming from.

In fact, holding forward the mind of Christ, the heart of Christ, the spirit of Christ means to hold forward the very nature of God, and that looks like (slide—hold forward)

- The nature of God is not self-seeking or power-grabbing; the nature of God is to truly see and understand things from another perspective (that's what incarnation means).
- It looks like obedience to love in our actions
 - Choosing to be kind when I don't wanna
 - Choosing to practice compassion when we don't wanna
 - "...a love that burns with desire for the flourishing of others..." (110) (slide—flourishing of others quote)

(Take down slide after I finish addressing the quote)

Shining as Lights in the World

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

¹⁴Do all things without murmuring and arguing, ¹⁵so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. ¹⁶It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

If this election, our politics, result in us violating our Christian character, then it's not Christ that's in charge of our lives. If you do nothing else, Paul says, hold fast—hold forward, Christ. There are a lot of other things we can hold onto, that can choose to put out in this world. This week, let us choose Christ. Let's think about the power of a few people committed to being the presence of peace and kindness. And after this week, after we know the outcome of this election, there is still work for us to do. May God continue growing us, sustaining us as a congregation to holds forward "...a love that burns with desire for the flourishing of others..." (110).