

Pastor David Anglada-Sermon Outline
“What Really Matter”- Philippians 3:4b-14
18th Sunday after Pentecost
October 4th, 2020
Grace Lutheran Church and School
Malverne, New York

4 If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. 7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. 10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.¹

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

God of all wisdom give us your Word and send us your Spirit so that we may know Christ.
Amen.

Good morning, I have a question for you today, what is most important to you, better yet, what matters to you?

The following is a brief list of what matters to people in the United States:

Taking care of my health: many would say that living a healthy life is the gateway to happiness. When we do not live with our fullest energy and vibrancy, how can we obtain life's pleasures and get the most out of living? My good Poco Louvenia, a Buddhist priest, has taught me the following statement: Is it not a bit crazy to think that people will spend more money on their car, their clothing, their homes than they would on their sacred bodies.

My family: most people state that my family is always with me even though we have our moments, at the end of the day, we are a loving, caring family. Although, our uncle Johnny tends to overindulge with spirits during family functions. But he is a good caring person.

Also, to have financial security as we get older. As good friend Tony Clement always says, I do not want to grow old to be eating cat food.

In his New York Times bestseller in 2008 The Rev. Dr. John Izzo "The Five Secrets You Must Discover," also stated that "What Matters" to people in the United States was:

Live with no regrets: at times, do not pan out the way we had planned, John states move forward with a new dream in life, the past is the past. We can only learn from the past. He encourages people to take more positive risks in our lives with a new direction of what we want.

Most importantly, how can we live with forgiving ourselves for not taking the steps we did not take?

Secondly, John Izzo's research indicated that what matters in people's lives was to become love—making love a priority in their lives.

Love is life.

"And if you miss love, you miss life.

"If you want others to be happy, practice compassion."

"If you want to be happy, practice compassion."

Thirdly, live the moment, enjoy life; every day is a gift. Do not allow a day to go unappreciated.

Fourthly, give more than you take. Giving matters to most people. As the saying goes you cannot take your material possession once you are gone.

Fifthly, being true to myself and my calling in life: living a life that aligns with who you are, being true to yourself. Not living someone's else dreams, but your aspirations in life. The following is an example: my good friend Cornell Edmonds, before attending seminary, was a successful lawyer with a prestigious law firm in Manhattan. However, he was not happy; he became a lawyer because his parents planted a seed in his heart to be a lawyer from the day he was born. So, Cornell went to law school to please, his parents; however, Mr. Edmonds disliked being an attorney. Deep down in his heart, he felt a calling from God to be a Word and sacrament pastor. So, he left his six-figure salary and decided to attend Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey, and today he is serving a Presbyterian congregation. I spoke with Pastor Cornell several months ago, and he stated, "I am so blessed to be serving the people of God."

In our second reading today, from Philippians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul writes a letter to his spiritual children between 57 to 58 C.E. St. Paul was the founder of this assembly. The congregation was led by women—thus ending the rumor that St. Paul did not like or work with women (Acts 16:-40).

When St. Paul writes his letter from Rome to the Philippians, he most likely was under house arrest. He was a prisoner awaiting adjudication or verdict before Caesar.

The reason why he writes to the saints of God in Macedonia stems from various factors. The first being to thank them for their continuous support of him. Secondly, to reject the counsel of what he killed killers of the flesh, they taught a false doctrine that if Gentiles wanted to be faithful followers of the messiah, they needed to be circumcised. Paul calls them dogs. Paul was articulating that a Christian men's, circumcision surgery was without purpose.² Thirdly, that Christians are not required to observe Jewish law. Fourthly, to remind them to be careful of false teachers, Paul calls them "enemies of the cross."³

By the way, many New Testament teachers inform us "that this letter to the Philippians is his most joyful and uplifting letter that St. Paul penned."⁴

The Apostle Paul also writes to communicate to the gathered assembly in Philippi **what truly matters in his life.**

Paul shares with the Philippians what he considers to be paramount in his life.

He informs them what is essential for him. He reveals to them his past and what matters in his life in the present and the future.

The Apostle Paul shares his taught by stating that "If an individual thinks that he or she has confidence in the flesh, I yet more," When Paul speaks of confidence in the flesh, he referred to salvation that a person can try to obtain under Jewish laws and traditions.⁵

Please note, Paul is not arguing a message against the Jewish nation. Paul is challenging the notion that anyone who thinks they can show off that they are righteous before God or made right before God because of their Jewish religion they are mistaken. If there is an individual that can brag about their religious practices and roots, he surely can claim to be number one for self-righteousness. In other words, if a person wants to claim preeminence, it is he.

The Apostle Paul outlines his argument by sharing his past from birth to the present.

"I was circumcised eight days after I was born." My parents followed the law given to Abraham as a sign of God's covenant with a nation (Genesis 17: 10-14).

"I am of the stock of Israel," in other words, I am Jewish by birth. Many would argue that the Apostle Paul was born as an insider within the Jewish circle.

"I am of the tribe of Benjamin," the tribe of Benjamin was significant in transferring the kingship to King David in the Hebrew Scriptures. Paul takes pride in tracing his roots to the tribe of Benjamin. An example of this would be my grandfather would say, my family came from the Yoruba people, an African ethnic group that inhabits western Africa.

"Concerning the law, a Pharisee." I adhered to Jewish law to the letter; I am an expert in interpreting Jewish law. Moreover, I was taught Jewish law by a rabbi Gamaliel, a leading Pharisee who was the consultant to the Jewish Sanhedrin—Jewish court made up of Rabbi's).

"Concerning zeal, persecuting the assembly." I was involved in the persecution of Christ-followers, who formed the "ekklesia," the church. I also was involved in executing the Christian martyr Stephen. I was an active persecutor of Christians. My hands are stained with the martyr's blood.

"Concerning the righteousness, which is in the law, found blameless." Paul is referring to his understanding before meeting Christ on the road to Damascus. After his encounter with Christ, he realized that his faithfulness to the law had been incomplete. I was chief among sinners while thinking I was not because I keep my traditional Jewish law.

"However, what things were gain to me, these Have counted loss or rubbish for Christ so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, based on faith. "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection as well as sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death."

Paul is revealing to his beloved spiritual children, "that his world was turned upside down." Everything I was born with and everything I learned is now rubbish." Everything I had was dung-animal excrement or garbage. I had no power over what trapped my heart.

What matters today and tomorrow is to know Christ; this is what truly matters today. I want to know Christ and know him in the power of his resurrection.

I want to know Christ in the present, and when I die to "be resurrected like Christ was." Moreover, I want to know Christ in his fellowship (Koinonia); Paul wants to know Christ intimately; not just intellectually but to know Christ from within- a matter of the heart.

My good sisters and brothers, what matters in your life? St. Paul said that Christ is what really matters to him. What about you?

There is a big difference between knowing Christ and knowing about him. Sometimes I wonder if we know about Christ versus knowing Christ in our lives. When we know Christ, we live out our baptismal calling in the world. We love people, and we are kind heart, we forgive, we seek to be in relationship with people instead of fighting and hating. We build bridges of love instead of walls that keep us from each other.

So, what matters in your life?

RESPONSE TO WORD

The cornerstone that the builders rejected is our foundation and our strength. Christ, we build our lives on you—those who turn from God and forsake God's ways labor in vain. Christ, we set our hearts on you. The ways of life are hidden from the unrighteous. Christ, we place our hope on you.

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² Sermon Writer, Biblical Commentary, Bible Study on Philippians 3: 4-14.

³ Ibid. p.1

⁴ Ibid. p.2

⁵ Ibid. p. 3