



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Second Sunday in Advent (C) – Philippians 1:3-11

Focus: *Partners to the End*

word of life

“I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.”

Philippians 1:3-5 (NRSV)

Read Philippians 1:3-11

Paul begins his letter to the Philippians with a customary greeting indicating the origin of the letter and the intended recipients. The style follows the common format used in Paul’s day and would have been familiar to his readers.

1. *Think about formal letters that we send today. What would you expect to see?*
2. *Do you read a formal letter differently than a personal, handwritten note?*
3. *How do you think Paul’s letter was received in Philippi?*

After the opening greeting, Paul speaks a word of thanksgiving and a commitment to pray for the church in Philippi. “I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you.” (Philippians 1:3-4 NRSV) It is obvious that Paul has great fondness for the community of believers in Philippi.

4. *What does it mean to you to be remembered and prayed for “with joy”?*
5. *Who in your life do you remember with thanksgiving and pray for with joy?*

Paul then speaks of the reason for his affection for the Philippians: “...because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now.” (Philippians 1:5 NRSV)

The word translated *sharing* in the NRSV is the Greek word *koinonia*. The word has come to be used today to describe the warm relationship between Christians or the fellowship experienced among believers. And certainly there is evidence of this fellowship in Paul’s expressions of gratitude for the community. But the word *koinonia* is rooted in the realm of commerce. It describes a relationship between two parties who enter into an agreement where they agree to share the labor, expenses, risk, and reward of their venture – regardless of their social or economic status. The agreement endures as long as both parties are “of the same mind” (a phrase used later by Paul in Philippians 2:2).

Paul sees the partnership between himself and the Philippians as grounded in the good news of Jesus Christ. That partnership is truly *koinonia*, “...for all of you share in God’s grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.” (Philippians 1:7 NRSV). They share not only in the gospel but also in their suffering. What a true partnership!

6. *Share an instance when you experienced koinonia.*

It is Paul’s prayer that the fruits of their *koinonia* – the love they experience and extend to Paul and to others – might grow with knowledge and full insight as they await the day of Christ. (vs. 9) His words offer believers in every time and place a model of how to live in this Advent time as we await Christ’s coming. We live in *koinonia* as partners in the gospel until the end.

word among us

Partnership. We hear this word and think of a business relationship – of two or more parties sharing a common value or goal. We think of agreements and alliances formed for a common purpose. We think of a couple having been married 50 years – for better, for worse, in sickness and in health – who speak of the longevity of their relationship as a partnership that will last “until death do us part.”

1. *Name some partnerships in your life.*
2. *When do partnerships work best?*

Paul writes with great affection to his partners in the gospel living in Philippi; his words echo in our day as well. We are to live in *koinonia* – in partnership with one another. Our partnership is grounded in the gospel which connects us one to another. It is a partnership not only in the good news but also in times of struggle. Paul writes of the Philippians sharing God’s grace with him “... both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.” (Philippians 1:7 NRSV)

The implications of such a relationship have a lasting impact. The Philippians are one of the churches in Macedonia lifted up by Paul as an example of giving generously for the struggling church in Jerusalem. (See 2 Corinthians 8:1-3.) Their abundant generosity, even in the midst of their poverty, serves as a witness to the *koinonia* – the partnership, the relationship in the gospel. Paul prays that their love “... may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best.” (Philippians 1:9-10) He urges them to be faithful partners until the coming of Christ.

3. *Give some concrete example of ways that you or your church live out the relationship with others (global and local mission, social services, etc.).*
4. *How can you increase in your giving so that your love might overflow more and more?*

faith practice in daily life

Live among God’s faithful people

*Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;
The unity of heart and mind is like to that above.
We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear,
And often for each other flows the sympathizing tear. (Evangelical Lutheran Worship #656)*

We have been entered into a relationship with others in our baptism. We are called to live among God’s faithful people. This partnership is central for our daily living. As we live in *koinonia* and allow that love for others to overflow, we are given knowledge and insight to help us “... determine what is best.” (Philippians 1:9-10 NRSV) Living in God’s grace and love in partnership with other believers, we discover our calling as God’s faithful people.

5. *What do you hope to personally contribute to the partnership with other Christians?*

Prayer

Loving God, you have called us into relationships with you and others. Help us to live lives of generosity and love in all we say and do. Amen

last word

Look this week
for partnerships of love and generosity.