

Sermon Topic: Match your Desire with Determination by Pr Wendy Chiang-Cheong

Sermon Text: Philippians 3: 7-16

Recap:

1. Christian affection be demonstrated, not disguised or hidden.
2. Chains can be used for good to bring someone to Jesus
3. Christian citizens should:
 - Carry themselves with higher code of conduct
 - Copy Jesus' example as pattern of life
 - Cooperate with God to be blameless

Philippians 3:7-16 New International Version (NIV)

⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in ^[a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. ¹³ Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. ¹⁶ Only let us live up to what we have already attained.

Knowing Jesus is good but knowing Jesus Surpasses Greatness Far Beyond?

Paul's relationship with Jesus was excellent by all measures. Paul describes it as a the best investment in terms of profit and loss account. If the Christian life is one profit and loss account, what would ours look like?

Paul however, did not start off this way, he was confident of his former lifestyle:

- Circumcised on the 8th day
- Was of the people of Israel
- Was of the tribe of Benjamin
- Hebrews of Hebrews
- A Pharisee
- He persecuted the Church
- Faultless in righteousness

Why seven descriptions? Seven in Judaism symbolizes wholeness and perfection.

Paul audited his former self by rationalizing his background:

- Pure blood heritage, chosen people, favourite tribe
- Schooled under the best Gamaliel
- Most promising career
- Peak of his religious experience
- Blameless for God's side for what is right

He thought he was perfect, wholesome Paul until he met Jesus on road to Damascus. He came to the realisation that he has been calculating with the wrong measure:

- Compared his perfect life with other people, his achievements looked mightily good
- Compared his life with perfect Jesus and all works of his flesh became rags (loss)

1st Truth: Don't count on works of our flesh. Count instead of Jesus who is our best investment.

No matter how good they are: our accomplishments, favour, intelligence, status, religious experience and moral practices. They can be used to tell of God's mercy but never depend on them to be a basis of acceptance before God, these works of ours is not indicative of greatness, approval or favour. **God's acceptance of us is based on the righteousness of Jesus Christ.**

That audit changed Paul's life direction. You won't count on Jesus till you realise what you had counted on is unsustainable. Paul realised it and embarked on a course with one goal that anchors his action. His desire was a personal & practical knowing of Jesus:

- in his power and pain,
- in his pattern of serving in humility and obedience
- Paul developed the desire to know Jesus in this totality.

Desire however, is the start but not the end of all achievements. Paul indicates his desire but he knows that he is not all there yet (2 conjunctive adverbs). Knowing Jesus is a lifelong growth journey that requires effort.

A growth mindset challenges status quo, not there yet? Work hard to get there!

Why are we not as hungry to grow with him? We often find that Jesus is at the last of our agenda. We are prone to forget his goodness and faithfulness. We seldom take effort in spiritual discipline to take effort growth in Christ. Could be that we have taken His love and mercy for granted? Or perhaps we have placed the process of salvation and sanctification of on the lower rung of our priorities?

Listening through conjunctives adverbs

- Knowing Jesus is 1st possible because God's power draws us.
- Growth in Christian life is a responsibility that we cannot abandon

If our goal is to know Jesus, we should strive to match desire and determination.

Pressing on requires two actions:

- Forgetting – past success, pleasures, failures and sins – Mediate on God’s Word
- Strain Forward – Maturity, Purpose and Concern for Souls

Press on because:

- Those who pursue maturity think this way (3:15)
- We’re citizens of Heaven (3:20)
- There will be a prize presentation day (3:14, 20)

As we grow older, we gather burdens and emotional clutter, we must review and clear out the clutter in our lives. Is your life defined by “Know Jesus or No Jesus?” If the former, then match your desire with determination.

Further Study + Reflection + Discussion

1. How do our earthly treasures and achievements compare with the ‘surpassing greatness’ of knowing Christ?
2. What are the great spiritual blessings that come with knowing Christ (e.g. Col 2:3, Eph 1: 3-14)?
3. The statement in 3:9 has been described as one of the most concise on how God made us right in His sight. What can we learn from this verse?
4. In Paul’s view, what does it mean to ‘know’ Christ (v 8, 10)?
5. What do v 12-14 tell us about discipleship and spiritual ambition (see also 2 Tim 2:15)?

Application:

Consider Paul’s aspirations in v 3:8-11, and his resolve in v 12-14. To what extent are these our own aspirations, and how may this be evidenced in our daily lives?