

Philippians 2:12-30
(Isaiah 60:1-3; Matthew 5:14-16)
“Working Out What God Works In”

Introduction

The apostle Paul wrote this his most joyful letter while a prisoner in Rome. In the first half of this second chapter, he has told us that what encouraged him most in prison was hearing that his friends were living a transformed, counter-cultural life, consistent with having what Paul calls “the mind of Christ.” In the verses before us, Paul continues his description of what it means to have the mind of Christ.

Four things stand out to me as I read these verses, and I commend them to you on this first Sunday in Advent, as we begin to prepare for the celebration of Christ’s laying aside his glory, becoming one of us and offering himself in our place so that we might live with him forever. What difference should our having his mind make in our lives? If salvation is not merely an event in our past, but a new life, what should mark that new life?

Body

- 1. We should be working out what God works in us (2:12-13).**
- 2. We should be fearing and trembling our way into joy (2:12).**
- 3. We should be shining as lights in places of darkness (2:15).**
- 4. We should be holding fast to the word of life (2:16).**

Conclusion

Paul ends this chapter with two illustrations of those who have the mind of Christ: Timothy, who was Paul’s representative to the Philippian Christians, and Epaphroditus, who was the Philippians’ representative to Paul. Each man is depicted as a servant of Christ, risking his life for the sake of the gospel. Paul encourages the church at Philippi to receive them “in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men” (2:29).

The implication is clear: we who also have the mind of Christ are called to imitate such people as we, too, “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in [us], both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (2:12-13).