

Philippians 2:1-11
November 5, '17

“BIBLICAL GEOMETRY”

I RECENTLY TOLD YOU, IN “THE MESSENGER,” OF MY ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS – OR, MORE PRECISELY, MY LACK THEREOF.

IN FACT, IF IT WEREN'T FOR ONE PARTICULAR AREA OF STUDY, I'M NOT SURE I WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GRADUATE FROM COLLEGE.

IN MY SOPHOMORE YEAR, I LEARNED – QUITE SURPRISINGLY – THAT I WAS ABLE TO DO WELL IN MATH CLASSES.

I ENDED UP TAKING AS MANY AS I COULD BECAUSE THEY HELPED BOOST MY GRADE POINT TO AN ALMOST RESPECTABLE LEVEL.

WHILE I DID WELL IN ALL THOSE MATH CLASSES – PRIMARILY DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GEOMETRY & ALGEBRA – I REMEMBER VIRTUALLY NOTHING FROM ANY OF THEM & THAT – COUPLED WITH THE FACT THAT WE HAVE, AMONG US THIS MORNING, THOSE WHO HAVE TAUGHT THOSE SUBJECTS (EVEN AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL!), I AM NOT ABOUT TO TRY TO TELL YOU ANYTHING ABOUT ALGEBRA OR GEOMETRY.

ONE THING I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT RECENTLY, THOUGH, IS THAT NIFTY LITTLE SHAPE CALLED A PARABOLA.

I WAS GOING TO TRY TO REFRESH MY MEMORY BY READING UP ON PARABOLAS.

I FIGURED THE BEST PLACE FOR ME TO GO WOULD BE “PARABOLAS FOR DUMMIES.”

SO HERE'S WHAT I FOUND: "THE GRAPH OF A QUADRATIC FUNCTION IS A SMOOTH, U-SHAPED CURVE THAT OPENS EITHER UPWARD OR DOWNWARD, DEPENDING ON THE SIGN OF THE COEFFICIENT OF THE X^2 TERM. THE VERTEX AND INTERCEPTS OFFER THE QUICKEST, EASIEST POINTS TO HELP WITH THE GRAPH OF THE PARABOLA."

AFTER READING THAT, I WAS LEFT WONDERING IF THERE'S A "BEGINNER'S VERSION OF PARABOLAS FOR DUMMIES!"

THE ONLY THING I REMEMBER ABOUT PARABOLAS IS THAT YOU'D DO WHATEVER IT IS YOU HAVE TO DO & YOU'D END UP WITH DOTS GOING DOWN EITHER SIDE OF A PAGE UNTIL YOU ENDED UP WITH A DOT IN THE VERY CENTER AT THE BOTTOM.

I REMEMBER IT WAS SO COOL TO SEE HOW – WHEN YOU'D CONNECT THE DOTS – YOU'D HAVE THIS PERFECTLY-FORMED "U."

YOU HAVE TO "CONNECT THE DOTS," THOUGH, TO SEE THE FIGURE.

YOU HAVE TO "CONNECT THE DOTS" TO SEE HOW IT ALL COMES TOGETHER.

LAST WEEK, MARK NICHOLSON GAVE US TEN REASONS WHY "CONNECTING THE DOTS" FITS US WELL AS A THEME FOR STEWARDSHIP.

EVERYTHING IN OUR LIVES FITS TOGETHER.

WHEN THINGS FLOW PROPERLY FROM ONE THING TO ANOTHER, THERE IS PURPOSE & SIGNIFICANCE TO WHO WE ARE & WHO GOD HAS CALLED US TO BE – BOTH AS AN INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVELY AS CHRIST'S CHURCH.

THIS PASSAGE WE’VE READ THIS MORNING IS A MARVELOUS EXAMPLE OF THE WAY GOD HAS CALLED US INDIVIDUALLY & COLLECTIVELY TO SERVE CHRIST IN A SPECIFIC FASHION.

PHILIPPIANS IS GENERALLY REGARDED AS THE WARMEST AND FRIENDLIEST OF PAUL’S THIRTEEN LETTERS THAT WE FIND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

CLEARLY, THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH WAS A HEALTHY & HAPPY CONGREGATION.

PAUL VERY CLEARLY HAD A CLOSE, VERY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH THIS CHURCH.

THAT DOESN’T MEAN, THOUGH, THAT EVERYTHING WAS PERFECT THERE.

IN THE VERY FIRST CHAPTER, PAUL CALLED FOR ONENESS & FOR A UNITY OF SPIRIT.

HERE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SECOND CHAPTER, WE FIND HIM DOING SOMETHING THAT HE DOES WITH GREAT REGULARITY IN HIS LETTERS WHEN HE GETS OVERWHELMED WITH A PARTICULAR THOUGHT.

THE FIRST FOUR VERSES OF THE SECOND CHAPTER ARE ONE VERY LONG SENTENCE.

PAUL GETS HOLD OF AN IDEA – OR, MORE APPROPRIATELY, AN IDEA GETS HOLD OF HIM – AND HE JUST CAN’T STOP HIMSELF.

ONE OF THE THINGS HE SAYS IN THESE RUNAWAY VERSES IS A VIRTUAL SYNOPSIS OF THIS ENTIRE BOOK BECAUSE HE TALKS ABOUT “JOY.”

AS MUCH AS ANYTHING ELSE, THIS LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS IS ABOUT “JOY.”

THAT'S A WORD THAT WE FIND IN THE VERY CENTER OF OUR MASTERPIECE LOGO HERE AT THE FRONT OF THE SANCTUARY.

WHATEVER ELSE OUR FAITH IS – WHATEVER ELSE IS INVOLVED IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH ONE ANOTHER – WHATEVER ELSE OUR FINANCIAL COMMITMENT AMOUNTS TO – IT SHOULD ALL BE CENTERED ON JOY.

WHAT PAUL SAYS HERE IS – “*MAKE MY JOY COMPLETE.*”

BUT WHAT'S INTERESTING IS THAT HE FOLLOWS UP THAT PHRASE WITH A PARTICULAR PUNCTUATION MARK.

IT'S A COLON.

A COLON IS COMPRISED OF TWO DOTS – ONE AT THE TOP AND ONE AT THE BOTTOM.

IT'S USED TO INTRODUCE A LIST OR EMPHASIZE A POINT.

WHAT PAUL IS SAYING HERE IS THAT THE PHILIPPIAN BELIEVERS CAN MAKE HIS JOY COMPLETE BY DOING CERTAIN THINGS.

THE TWO DOTS OF THAT COLON CONNECT THE DOTS THAT BRING PAUL JOY: BEING OF THE SAME MIND, HAVING THE SAME LOVE, BEING IN FULL ACCORD, DOING NOTHING FROM SELFISH AMBITION BUT LOOKING TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.

NOW ALL OF THIS IS WELL & GOOD & ALL OF THIS IS REASON ENOUGH FOR THIS PASSAGE TO FIT OUR STEWARDSHIP THEME & ALL OF THIS IS SATISFACTORY FOR SHOWING US WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A FAITHFUL FOLLOWER OF JESUS CHRIST.

BUT PAUL'S JUST GETTING STARTED HERE & OUR LESSON IN CONNECTING THE DOTS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, OUR LESSON IN BIBLICAL GEOMETRY IS JUST BEGINNING TO TAKE SHAPE, SO TO SPEAK.

**BECAUSE IT'S HERE THAT PAUL GIVES US ONE OF THE MOST
MAGNIFICENT STATEMENTS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST EVER MADE.**

LISTEN TO THE FLOW OF HIS ARGUMENT.

**LISTEN TO THE WAY IN WHICH HE TELLS US ABOUT JESUS,
WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, TELLING US HOW WE ARE CALLED TO
LIVE.**

**HE SAYS, “LET THE SAME MIND BE IN YOU THAT WAS IN CHRIST
JESUS, WHO, THOUGH HE WAS IN THE FORM OF GOD, DID NOT REGARD
EQUALITY WITH GOD AS SOMETHING TO BE EXPLOITED, BUT EMPTIED
HIMSELF, TAKING THE FORM OF A SLAVE, BEING BORN IN HUMAN
LIKENESS. AND BEING FOUND IN HUMAN FORM, HE HUMBLERD HIMSELF
AND BECAME OBEDIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH— EVEN DEATH ON A
CROSS. THEREFORE GOD ALSO HIGHLY EXALTED HIM AND GAVE HIM
THE NAME THAT IS ABOVE EVERY NAME, SO THAT AT THE NAME OF
JESUS EVERY KNEE SHOULD BEND, IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH AND
UNDER THE EARTH, AND EVERY TONGUE SHOULD CONFESS THAT JESUS
CHRIST IS LORD, TO THE GLORY OF GOD THE FATHER.”**

DO YOU SEE WHAT PAUL HAS DONE HERE?

**CAN YOU SHARPEN YOUR GEOMETRY PENCIL & PLOT THE
POINTS ON A GRAPH?**

YOU START AT THE VERY TOP.

JESUS, THOUGH HE WAS IN THE FORM OF GOD...

**TAKE A STEP DOWN - “...DID NOT COUNT EQUALITY A THING TO
BE EXPLOITED...”**

DOWN – “...EMPTIED HIMSELF...”

DOWN – “...TAKING THE FORM OF A SLAVE...”

DOWN – “...BEING BORN IN HUMAN FORM...”

DOWN – “...OBEDIENT TO THE POINT OF DEATH...”

DOWN – THIS TIME TO THE VERY BOTTOM “...*EVEN DEATH ON A CROSS...*”

AND NOW, YOU START BACK UP THE OTHER SIDE – “...*GOD HIGHLY EXALTED HIM...*”

UP- “...*GAVE HIM THE NAME ABOVE EVERY NAME...*”

UP – “*SO THAT EVERY KNEE SHOULD BEND & EVERY TONGUE CONFESS...*”

BACK TO THE VERY TOP AGAIN – “...*JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!*”

YOU SEE, WHEN YOU CONNECT THE DOTS BETWEEN ALL OF THESE LEVELS – DROPPING DOWN TO THE BOTTOM & THEN SOARING BACK TO THE VERY TOP – WHAT YOU’RE LEFT WITH IS A PARABOLA – THE BIBLICAL GEOMETRY OF GOD THAT TELLS HOW WE ARE TO FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS CHRIST IN OUR OWN LIVES.

**YOU SEE, EVERYTHING ABOUT THIS IS SO COUNTERINTUITIVE!
THE ONLY WAY CHRIST MAKES IT TO THE TOP IS BY DROPPING DOWN TO THE BOTTOM.**

CHRIST CAME INTO THE WORLD NOT TO *WIELD* POWER BUT TO *YIELD* POWER.

IT RUNS AGAINST EVERYTHING THE WORLD TEACHES US.

BUT THAT HAPPENS TO BE THE WAY OF THE GOSPEL.

THE LAST WILL BE FIRST.

YOU FIND YOUR LIFE WHEN YOU GIVE IT AWAY.

YOU MORE YOU GIVE, THE MORE YOU RECEIVE.

IT MAKES ABOUT AS MUCH SENSE TO MOST OF US AS SITTING THROUGH A GEOMETRY CLASS!

WHEN WE CONNECT THE DOTS IN A BIBLICAL FASHION, WHEN WE LIVE ACCORDING TO GOD’S STANDARDS & NOT THE WORLD’S, WE FIND A BRAND-NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT LIFE.

**LIKE PAUL, WHEN WE FOLLOW GOD'S STANDARDS, WHEN WE
USE GOD'S MATH, IT IS THEN – AND ONLY THEN – THAT WE WILL FIND
TRUE JOY – A JOY THAT IS COMPLETE. AMEN.**

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