Philippians 2:1-2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one mind.

Can you tell me the strength of any organization? I am asking what makes a company, a store, a food chain, a sports team, even a country and lots of other things effective and stable?

The answer is: “unity.” Now we could say “unity of purpose” or “unity of direction.” In truth there are lots of ways to express this idea of unity in the various things that are out there. Think about our nation. It is true, we have had our sins and faults, but in truth the driving force of our country was unity, especially the idea of being unified in our freedoms and purpose. We unified to become an independent nation because we felt our British overseers did not care about our freedoms and welfare. We had a huge war to keep the unity of our Country and begin the long process of ending what was a bad thing among us, namely slavery. Think of how we expanded and that expansion was done for the purpose of unity as a nation, and, as is the way of the sinful world, that push for unity ran over others.

Look at the current strikes that are going on. What is really the issue? That owners and operators be unified in producing a product but that in producing that product the income and benefits become more equal or unified among all who are involved. Or I think of the riff this weekend between Aaron Rodgers and some of his fellow players. Evidently Aaron criticized some of his fellow players to help make them better players and such but that criticism got blasted all over the media. Aaron then made a statement that there is no way a team can be unified in its direction and purpose if things discussed in team meetings and in the locker rooms for the good of the team get used to divide the team. He was talking about the fact that there isn’t unity on the team and that such lack will harm them.

What is it that made McDonald’s so successful? Unity. No matter where you went you knew what you would find, what you could get and what it would be. That is really the basis for all successful businesses. If I want to produce a great watch and there is a whole part of the company that only wants to make shoes, this is not going to go well. Unity is the basis for all 12 step groups, for all help groups, for all successful apps and the like. We are involved in them because they fulfill a need in us, they unify us in purpose and such. So I guess as I look at the world and what I see, I see that being united is important.

What is the basis of the Church and the wonder of Jesus? What is the strength of the Church and the wonder of Jesus? I will tell you that the answer is “unity.” We see that truth expressed for us today in the words of our text. Let’s learn under this theme: **UNITED IN CHRIST.**

Here is the first thing you should know. The words before us form a simple conditional sentence. Well, it’s a bit more complicated than that because you actually have four things in the protasis and then four things in the apodosis. You’ll have to forgive me, I have given you the Greek words for the parts of a conditional sentence because I couldn’t remember the English names for such things (nor could I find them in my book, Complete Course of Freshmen English). The prodosis the first part, usually an “if” clause has four parts and then the apodosis, the “then” part also has four parts. The four parts go together. What it does is gives you four distinct things to seriously contemplate and follow up on.

So let me lay out how these four things go together. **“If there is any encouragement in Christ…then make my joy complete by being like-minded.”** Next one. **“If any comfort from his love…then have the same love.” “If any fellowship with the Spirit…then be united in spirit.”** And finally, **“If any affection and compassion…then have one mind.”** I will tell you, these are tremendous lessons for us. Lessons we do well to pay attention to. Let’s go to that first one.

The first simple conditional would be: **“So if there is any encouragement in Christ…then make my joy complete by being like-minded.”** Obviously, before you can determine what the “then” part is about you need to make sure you get what the first part is about. Please note that each of these first parts starts with that “if.” That is important to note. The success of the outcome depends on the where you start. Paul is addressing those who are a part of the congregation in Philippi. They have united together, they are linked and bonded together all because of Jesus and what he is about. As you read the first chapter of Philippians it is clear that Jesus and the salvation Jesus has won for them is to be the driving force of all of their lives. If you remember, last week I mentioned two statements from chapter 1 that were great statements of what faith was. The first was from verse 21, **“Yes, for me, to live is Christ.”** The second was from verse 27, **“Conduct yourselves in a way that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ.”** Now, take those two things and look at our sentence to get the point.

**“If there is any encouragement in Christ.”** Hey, if Jesus means something to you, if you grasp his sacrifice, his forgiveness, his Majesty and honor, His redemption and free salvation, if you can comprehend the awesomeness of Jesus the Christ, the Son of the Living God saving you….all of these things are what make up this if. The encouragement and wonder of Jesus is in what He has done. Now comes our next part.

**THEN!** We have a then here because it is clear that when you get the first part the second part will follow. **IF…THEN!** Knowing what Jesus is about has an impact, a result in our lives. In this case, Paul wants to emphasize a particular impact. **“Then make my joy complete by being like-minded.”** You should be imitating Jesus. Jesus wanted to please his Father. Jesus wanted to be perfect and holy for the good of all. Jesus wanted to make sure you and I have the gift of eternal life and salvation. Jesus laid down his life for you. If any of this means something to you, then our goal, our hope, our attitude is that we want to be like Jesus. Paul hits it right on the head when he states as a Pastor: **“make my joy complete!”** In truth, what a joy every congregation and saint would be if everyone had this grasp and attitude.

Look at the next condition. **If any comfort from his love…then have the same love.”** In truth, there is really not enough time or room in this world to speak of the tremendous depth and marvel of God’s love. In both parts of the conditional this is “agape” love that gracious, free, sure consistent and powerful love that flows from God. If you know about that love, then love the same. Dear people, this is a love that caused the Son of God to leave the majesty of heaven to enter our world as a true man. For over 30 years Jesus took on our lives, lived in a state of humiliation, endured every temptation, and then went to the cross to suffer our hell. I am always amazed when I lay out this love of Jesus and there are people who just don’t seem to care. Really! It is the greatest love there is. Because of Jesus we can share and imitate that love in our lives. Point of truth here is that we are basically being told that should that love be absent in our lives it is probably because we don’t have the marvel of Jesus’ love. Such is the power and lesson of a conditional sentence. The “if” produces a “then.” When there is no “then” it is probably because you don’t have the “if.”

Needless to say the greatest lesson on love is not only the life of Jesus but his very Words. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a. You know the words. **“Love is patient. Love is kind. Love does not envy. It does not brag. It is not arrogant. It does not behave indecently. It is not selfish. It is not irritable. It does not keep a record of wrongs. It does not rejoice over unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never comes to an end.”** I pray this is the kind of love found in your lives. I strive to let it be in mine.

And then, **“If any fellowship with the Spirit…be united in spirit.”** In truth this part is probably as complicated as thinking about all that Jesus is. Here we have the Holy Spirit and his work. He calls us to faith, keeps us in the faith, and strengthens our faith. But the Holy Spirit doesn’t do that by our flesh and blood. I use that phrase because we just had a Bible class where we talked of Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Christ the Son of God. Jesus told him, **“Flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.”** This revealing of Jesus, here ascribed to the Father, would become the work and task of the Holy Spirit whom the Father would send.

Jesus told us: **“For if I do not go away, the Counselor will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. When he comes, he will convict the world about sin, about righteousness, and about judgment…When he the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on his own, but whatever he hears he will speak. He will also declare to you what is to come. He will glorify me, because he will take from what is mine and declare it to you.”** We hear in 1 Corinthians 12:3 **“No one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.** Romans 1:5 **“God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit whom he has given us.”**

Our faith life is given by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works in us through the gospel in Word and sacrament. Note that. You will not find the comfort, hope and love of Jesus on a fishing boat, in the forest, or standing on the rim of a mountain enjoying the view. It is true, that in all of those things the reality of God, his majesty and power in creation, is clearly seen and if you are paying attention you can marvel at that. But you do not hear words of comfort from Jesus, you do not get the sacraments of the Lord, you do not sing hymns of praise and thanks and you do not raise your heart in prayer in those settings. God has given the Church for those purposes. You are to gather here to hear from your Pastor the wonder of what Jesus is. You are to gather here to join your voice in praise and glory to the Lord. You are to gather here to open your mouth in prayer and thanks. You are to gather here in order to encourage and spur on your neighbor in the wonders of Jesus.

All of these things are found in the Holy Spirit, in fellowshipping with the Holy Spirit. And from there we are encouraged: **“be united in spirit.”** Help each other. Pray for each other. Let each other know you are there to support them. Send cards to each other. Call each other. Get your children to Sunday school! But most important, be united in spiritual things. Stand firmly on God’s Word. Affirm at all times the truth and wonder of the Holy Scripture. Pray for your Pastor in the work he does. Support your church. And yes, for those of you who have made attendance electronic, send in your offerings, for you are still responsible to the Lord for sharing your gifts with Him. All of these things and probably more are found in this sentence. It is the way that the Lord works among us, through His Holy Spirit.

Then our final sentence: **“If any affection and compassion…then have one mind.”** I find this particular sentence so interesting. We already had a previous sentence that encouraged in love, but that was the love that emanated from the Lord, that agape love filled with grace. Even after speaking of the highest love, the apostle is moved to still speak of other emotions. Here the words used speak to our affections, those things that move us deeply and then they speak of our compassion and mercy toward each other.

To me, the first word here is awesome. Literally it is a word that refers to your innards, yep, your gut. I want you to think of yourself cheering for your favorite team. How you get excited when they are winning and down when they lose. How at every play or basket or hit you are thrilled and vocal. That’s the first word used here. That’s the affection spoken of here. God wants that same affection for your church. Not a “Well, I suppose we should get up and go to church” but rather a “Let’s go, there is church today!” But if you don’t find Jesus and his word encouraging, comforting and uplifting, why? Because every Thursday and Sunday the pastor works hard to bring you that awe and joy of the Lord. And in truth, if the pastor every weekend had a sermon that could put the dead to sleep, it wouldn’t matter. Because the service is full of Gospel and encouragement and hope and joy. And even a horrid sermon in the WELS is one that is still composed of Law and Gospel, a sermon based on God’s infallible truth of God’s victory in Christ. If you would but focus on the message and not the messenger you would find there is a message from Jesus for you! Our services boast of the Lord. So if you don’t feel that “gut” movement to be in church I will tell you I don’t think it is Jesus who is the problem. You have missed a few of the other sentences we have spoken of here.

That last word is “compassion.” It really is a word that speaks to our dealing with each other. We have a world filled with troubles, problems, hurts, sorrows, and evils. We have a life that can sometimes be a struggle, where we feel we are being drained and deflated. Yet we have Jesus. As we practice compassion and mercy for each other, what a game changer. We are lifted up and renewed in Jesus. For His compassion for us has become our compassion for each other. It is one of the important reasons for church.

Well, that covers it. Words of encouragement and notice how unity is so key. It is all found in Jesus. And do remember that following these words is that tremendous section that reviews the redemptive works of Jesus. He is what it is all about. That’s why all of this started by saying: **“If you have any encouragement in Christ.”** Dear people, “We do! We do! Amen.