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Proper 21, Year A
Church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields
27 September 2026

“Make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.” In the name of One God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Be of the same mind? Yes, that’s right, Paul commends the church at Philippi to be of *the same mind*.

This sounds awfully like the evil force in Madeleine L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle Time*, the large, disembodied brain called “IT” who governs the hive-mind, an ultra-conformist society on the planet Camazotz. Here there is no fear, pain, or freedom because all share one consciousness.

Now granted, having the same mind would make a lot of the day-to-day work of the church pretty easy. And Stewardship season would be a breeze.

The thought of a church, let alone the universal Church, having one mind is laughable, when you consider the amount of miscommunications, disagreements, not to mention schisms the Church racks up on a near daily basis.

And sure enough, the Christian community Paul is addressing in Phillippi is suffering from in-fighting. Two women are mentioned by name at the end of the letter. And yet, the tone of the letter is one of great joy and love. Paul is writing from his prison cell, where the church of Phillipi has recently visited him with some material support and comfort, sending a member named Epaphroditus.

The word Paul is using here for “mind” is one that doesn’t translate easily from the Greek. It can be best described as a mindset, or a shared purpose or interest, an insight that manifests itself in outward behavior and action.

And that mind, or mindset? Is Jesus.

At the heart of the letter is a poem, often called the Christ Hymn, which condenses the Gospel, or Good News of Jesus into a few beautiful verses. Jesus, as God, emptied himself, poured himself out

again and again for us – and it is because of his acts of self-denial, obedience, and humiliation – in the incarnation as well as his crucifixion – that he is now “high exalted,” “the name above every name.”

Paul is exhorting the church in Phillipi, a Roman colony with a highly stratified social order based chiefly on military contributions to the Roman Empire where veterans were at the top and slaves at the very bottom, to the same mindset of Jesus – who brought himself low to love and care for others.

Jesus’ meekness to the point of death, the shameful, humiliating death on the cross, appears to be the most pitiable weakness. And yet it was his greatest show of strength – to take upon himself all the evil of human selfishness, callousness, and cruelty and to overturn it, forever.

While the church in Philippi faced real persecution by Roman authorities, as Paul himself did, I don’t think Paul was calling on them, or us, to try and reenact Jesus’ epic sacrifice. What he is teaching the Philippians and us, is that in reflecting on our complete dependence on God; on believing in Jesus’ form of non-coercive, loving power and authority; on living as if each of our lives mattered in of themselves as well as part of a larger whole; on loving others in our actions as well as words; in listening attentively for the movement of Jesus’ Spirit; and looking for and prizing the fruits of God’s kingdom – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; and in moving out towards those places of suffering, woundedness; we may live out our calling to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world, right now, today. Amen.