

1 Corinthians 16:1-11 The Resurrection Community Falls Church AM 6/6/21

We have studied The Christ Event, which has four parts. 1) The Death of Christ on Good Friday, 2) the resurrection of Christ that Sunday, 3) then 40 days later The Ascension of Christ, and 4) the giving of the Spirit of Christ to the church on the Day of Pentecost, 50 days after Easter.

We ask – so what?

The lasting impact is that we have become the community that God designed us to become.

Since Jesus rose again, there is a permanent impact on our Christian community.

1. We share what we have for needs and for kingdom advance. (v.1-4)

Paul wrote to the Corinthians to inform them about the church over in another city that had fallen on hard times because of a shortage of food caused by a famine.

This created a climate of inequality. The church in that city had nothing while the churches around them had plenty. So, Paul specially arranged for money to be collected to respond to the financial problem in that distant church.

That is where we pick up in chapter 16. In verse 1, the first two words “now concerning...” are a clue from Paul to us as readers that he is starting a new topic. The topic is sharing. Share your money, share your goods, share your belongings. Especially when there is a church that is in need.

But why? Because whenever some people have more and other people have less, the Bible describes that in terms of injustice. A shortage is when there is not enough money to go around. An injustice is when money is not going around.

God is forming a community of people within His church who will take things that are not right, and make them right.

The community of people in the church look at the problem of the poor, and we say that is our problem.

Paul gives specific instructions how to share.

Verse 1 – collect money in the church in Corinth the same as they collect money in the churches of Galatia. Well, how did they do it? Paul gives details.

Verse 2 – share consistently – “*on the first day of every week*” (Sunday!)

Sharing does not come naturally to us. But doing so regularly is the first step in making sharing come more naturally to us.

share proportionally – “*each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper*” The more God gives you, the more you can share. Each of us is to share. Will it make any difference if you don’t share?

SI – a doctor who had served the poor in a little French village for many years, announced his retirement. The village leaders decided to have a retirement party, although everyone in the village was poor. What could they do? God causes grapes to grow around them there in France, so the villagers all had wine. The village leaders asked each villager to bring a pitcher of wine from their own wine cellar to donate toward a whole barrel of wine for the retiring doctor. On the official day, the village gathered, each bringing a pitcher, and in a ceremony they honored him with speeches and presented the gift of the village to him. That evening the doctor decided to sample his gift. He drew a glass from the barrel and found that it was water! Every villager had brought a pitcher of water, thinking that it would go unnoticed when mixed with a whole barrel of everyone else’s wine.

This illustrates that we ask the wrong question when we ask, “Will it make any difference if I don’t share?” Rather, the correct question to ask is, “What does God want me to do?” The answer is God wants you to share. God wants you to put something aside to share. And whenever God blesses you more, some of that is to be shared, too. Each person in the resurrection community shares!

Share deliberately – “*so that there will be no collecting when I come.*” Sharing cannot be an afterthought. What if Paul arrived, and then they said – oh, we have an idea - we should send along a gift to that hurting church, and Paul could transport the gift to them. No, we don’t scrape around last minute and scurry to do something nice, once all of our own priorities have been achieved. If we don’t make sharing a priority, we won’t share. Why? Because money and belongings turn us inward and away from others. The only solution is to deliberately share our money and belongings. This sharing connects us to others.

Money separates people. Sharing connects people.

The church is the community that unifies people. We reconcile people and relationships.

Verses 3-4, Paul knows how important it is that all the money arrangements are done in a trustworthy manner with full integrity.

Sharing builds trust and love. So, we guard against any mishandling of money, so that trust and love can continue to be built up.

Good money integrity is one of the ways that the kingdom advances.

We have heard a lot of outcry for justice in the last year.

One part of justice is money. The justice issue of money tied to integrity, trust, and love. The justice issue of money arises inequality of the privileged, compared to the underprivileged. But the issue of justice is more than money. It is deeper than money. And the church has answers for the deeper issues also. Which brings us to our second point.

2. We are friends sharing life. (v.5-9)

Paul is a friend to them. Paul does not just want their money for the kingdom. Paul does not just want financial sharing in the churches. Paul wants them to develop as his friends, and as friends to each other.

Paul wants to visit them (v.5), he wants to stay with them, perhaps all winter, and their help for his journey (v.6), Paul wants to spend significant time with them, not just in passing (v.7), Paul explained his travel schedule to them (v.8), and Paul opened his heart to them about the gospel work he was doing – both the encouragement and discouragements of it. Paul wants to share life together with them.

Already back in verse 3, Paul was wisely taking steps to protect friendships by sending people along with the money, so that the relationships get built up. Also back in verse 4, we saw that Paul was willing to go personally himself, if it was wise to do so to maintain and deepen his friendships with them. The church that Christ is building up, by His resurrection power, is a community that does not just provide funding for projects, but also provides relationships moving toward friendships. Christians are being taught by Paul not just to share money, but to share themselves.

A community like this is what the world needs. It is what the world is searching for, without knowing it, when the world is crying out Justice! People are marching and rallying for justice. What do they really want? They want what God gives us in the church – the resurrection community. We live in times when the gap between the rich and the poor is getting bigger. All of the other proposed solutions miss the point.

Conservatives say sharing money is the answer – charity, philanthropy.

Liberals say the government should share money.

Both routes say – let me give you what I think you need, without bothering to get to know you.

The point is that the poor need us to share both our money and our lives.

We share our goods AS we share our lives.

When the poor are not just a concept, but our friends, when we know their dreams and their life stories because we do life together, we tend to share our belongings and funding.

Notice what Paul wrote in verse 6, “*perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me*”

Paul knew that friendship is a two-way street. Friendship is both giving and receiving. Paul got as much as he gave.

What we do wrong is having a distance between donors and recipients.

The donors and the recipients need to be friends.

The poor are not objects of charity – they are people.

We don’t minister to the poor, we minister along with them.

The poor help us to avoid the deceitfulness of riches, and much as we help them to avoid the powerlessness of poverty.

We were made friends by the resurrection of Christ. We are friends forever!

3. We welcome everyone, across all dividing lines. (v.10-11)

Up to this point, we talked about economic lines.

Are there more ways that the gospel crosses dividing lines and unites people? Yes.

The gospel reaches across every possible dividing line.

The financial gift was going to the church in Jerusalem, with a lot of Jewish Christians.

The gift was coming from the churches in Galatia and Corinth, some of the most influential Greek areas. Jews and Gentiles were divided racially.

But here, they are coming together. How? The resurrection community has started a process of reconciliation. The Gentile churches were providing financial gifts to the Jewish church.

Paul goes on and makes that concept personal in verse 10. “When Timothy comes...” The community that Christ is building must be taught how to receive Timothy. Why? Because Timothy was not as well-trained as Paul was. Timothy was not as credentialed and did not have the same status as Paul had.

Corinth would need to welcome Timothy as they had welcomed Paul, because both were doing the work of the Lord. Listen to verse 10, “*When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am.*”

Okay, accept the younger minister. Got it. Is that really a dividing line?

Look at verse 11, “So, let no one despise [Timothy].” Stop. Hold up.

Despise? This is a very strong word, even in English. The Greek word Paul originally wrote down communicates intense hatred. Don't let anyone hate Timothy. What?

Corinth was like New York -- interested in credentials and status.

Where did you go to school? What is your degree...your occupation? How much do you make? Where do you live? And by asking these questions, they size you up quickly.

Paul had a few PhDs. Paul had the success of having started 14 churches, and some of those churches were now starting churches.

The church in Corinth was used to having Paul around, and they were challenging Paul! Any hostility that they had toward Paul would rub off on his new co-worker Timothy.

Timothy did not have the degrees and accomplishments that Paul had.

Timothy did not have the commanding charisma that Paul had.

Timothy was not really the type of minister that Corinth would enjoy.

But Paul is instructing Corinth to do what a resurrection community is supposed to do – to reach across all dividing lines to receive Timothy.

Reach across the dividing line of status.

Reach across the dividing line of charisma and big personality.

Reach across the dividing line of educational credentials and degrees.

Reach across the dividing line of accomplishments and competence.

This is what the church is like. We are a community that reaches across not just race and gender, but we reach across all dividing points.

We share our things we share our lives, and we open our hearts.

It is a good thing that this call comes right after a powerful chapter 15 about the resurrection. Because we can look to The Resurrected One who has gone before us, swallowing up sin and death and injustice. We can look to The Resurrected One, who rose in triumph over divisions of all kinds.

We can look to the Resurrected One, who keeps on walking this pathway with us. Jesus shared his things with us, and shared his life with us. Jesus even gave away His life for us on a cross. When we look to ourselves, we cannot do what is needed to stay in a community like this. But when we look to Jesus the Resurrected One, we find hope to remain in the Resurrection Community of the Church.

Conclusion: We cannot become vibrant part of the Resurrection Community overnight. We need to break it down to steps. What are 3 practical steps you could take to better live out The Resurrection Community is supposed to be?

Step 1 – share your money regularly. Share consistently, proportionally, and deliberately. Sit down and set aside a portion of your income every week and share it. You spend money every week, right? Do you share money every week? Share until it becomes natural for you, because Jesus changed your nature. You are naturally generous now.

Step 2 – share your life until you are true friends. Get to know people who are different from you in our church. People on the other side of the dividing line. Share your life with them. Share life together. Get deeply involved in their lives. Let them get deeply involved in your life. Keep going until you can call them friends. Cross that line, and share your heart and life.

Step 3 – cross a dividing line with only Christ’s love to lead you. Go outside the church and find a hated person, and start to help. Find a way to branch out and advocate for a dis-privileged person. Stand up for a despised person. Help him or her. Work toward having a friendship with a person who is truly in need.

Do all of this in the light of the Risen Lord, who has already won our victory. Let me end by reminding you of the end of the previous chapter, *“...thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”*