

***EVERYTHING COMMUNICATES***  
**Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Philippians 1:27-30**

**(Read Philippians 1:27-30)**

**Intro:** Last week some people that we know were at a local restaurant and they decided they would never go back. Why? Because there was a fly frozen into the ice cubes in their water – and to add insult to injury, there was another dead fly on the lemon slice in that same glass of water.

Everything communicates something.

Pastor James Montgomery White, from whom I received the inspiration for this talk, shared this story:

*“I’ll never forget a story I heard about Ray Kroc, the person who turned McDonald’s into the franchise juggernaut it now is. When he paid a “surprise” visit to a Winnipeg franchise, it is reported that he found a single fly.*

*The franchisee lost his McDonald’s franchise two weeks later.”*

That’s pretty brutal. But then again, I’m certain that Kathy and I will not go back to the restaurant that had flies in their ice cubes – even though it has previously been a favorite of ours. Flies in my drink, as White’s writes, “. . . trumpet how people should feel about the message and overall reliability of the entire enterprise. I like how one airline executive put it: “Coffee stains on the flip-down trays [in the airplane] mean [to the passenger] that we do our engine maintenance wrong.” For the church, coffee stains on the flip-down trays mean that maybe we’re getting the message about eternal life wrong.”

Everything communicates. If someone comes here to church for the first time and a smiling face greets them at the door and welcomes them warmly, a very good impression is made. On the other hand, if someone new comes the church and they can’t find a parking space or the restrooms are messy or the nursery is unattended with munchkins running wild, a bad impression is made.

Everything communicates.

Even if we’re not trying, communication happens.

How we live out our faith communicates something. If people know that we are Christ followers, but they don’t see Christ in us, what does that say about our faith?

I’m pretty certain I’ve told you this story before, but it’s very appropriate here. Back in the summer of 1972 my brother, Phil, and I were heading home to Collegeville, PA from a week of painting a farm in near Elizabethtown, PA. We were in Phil’s brand-new powder blue VW bug (that’s why I know it was 1972), and we were motoring along Route 23 when a car blasted around us with barely enough room to pass. As he drove by I noticed a Honk If You Love Jesus bumper sticker on the rear of his car. So, being a 15 year old with impulse control issues AND a love for Jesus, I reached over and, to Phil’s horror, beeped the horn. The response from the passing Jesus Freak was a one finger salute that has become known as “the Bird”. I was nonplussed to be sure and my brother’s opinion of Christians was not improved. I remember the entire 10 second experience like it was yesterday rather than 52 years ago. Why? Everything communicates – and it makes a lasting impression.

Paul was in prison in Rome writing to his beloved friends in Philippi and in the opening of the letter he includes the charge *Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel*, Philippians 1:27. He prays that their life might live up to the Good News of Jesus Christ. And that brings up the question for us two thousand years later. . .

**What does our profession as Christ Followers say about God?**

- Remember, everything communicates. So what do others see in us that shows that Jesus is in charge of our life? This is a crucial question in a day when Christianity is seen in a less and less positive light. This is partially because we are portrayed in a less than complimentary fashion in popular culture and media but it’s also because too often Christians have behaved in a way that is not worthy of the Gospel. Instead of standing firm we have acted in fear in a way that contradicts our profession of our faith in our God who is our deliverer.
- Too often our bumper stickers say one thing but our actions and our words say something else. Our text from Ecclesiastes tells us to . . .

## Fear God

- Because when we do we don't fear anything else. We take him at his word when he tells us, . . . *fear not, for I am with you;*  
*be not dismayed, for I am your God;*  
*I will strengthen you, I will help you,*  
*I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.* Isaiah 41:10  
And we mean what we say when we proclaim,  
*The Lord is my light and my salvation;*  
*whom shall I fear?*  
*The Lord is the stronghold of my life;*  
*of whom shall I be afraid?* Psalm 27:1
- You see, too often we say one thing and act like another – that's not a good witness since everything communicates.
- So, do what God tells you. Our text actually says it is to be everything we are to do. Listen, *Fear God and obey his commands, for this is everyone's duty.* Ecclesiastes 12:13b (NLT). When you fear God – you have nothing else to fear – and it shows.
- So . . .

## Live in a way that shows you believe God's word

- Do you believe what is in these pages? Really?! Then, as Peterson puts it, *live in such a way that you are a credit to the Message of Christ.* Philippians 1:27 (The Message).
- Paul goes on to say that he wants to hear that the Christ Followers in Philippi are standing firm in one spirit. No matter what comes along we can sing with the same confidence of our kids when they sang in VBS,  
*Stand firm when life changes*  
*Stand firm through the ups and downs*  
*Stand firm for you know that*  
*God is in control*
- Do we believe that? Then we should put our money where our mouth is and . . .

## Trust Jesus and don't be afraid to suffer

- That's what Paul is telling us here. Here are his exact words, *For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,* Philippians 1:29. Peterson says it like this, *There's far more to this life than trusting in Christ. There's also suffering for him. And the suffering is as much a gift as the trusting.* Philippians 1:29 (The Message).
- How is it that we sing, *All to Jesus I surrender,* but then we run away when the going gets tough? What does that say to those who are watching? In Acts 4 and 5 we have the account of Peter and John being arrested for teaching about Jesus. As they met with the religious leaders they were told not to preach and their answer was, *"We must obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."* Acts 4:29b-32. At this, the outcry from the religious leaders was to have them executed, but they were persuaded instead to watch and wait to see if this Jesus thing was real. So it says, *they called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.* Acts 5:40. But what did the apostles do? Did they go home and give up the Gospel? Or did they file a lawsuit for defamation of character? Or did they write a letter to the editor complaining that their rights had been trampled? None of the above – it says, *Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.* Acts 5:41-42.
- Peter and John rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer for Jesus. Archibald Hunter writes of the recurring theme in Paul's letters and definitely in our Philippians text that people *who have experienced God's mercy must live up to their high calling.* It's our high calling to serve the Lord – regardless of the

outcome. That speaks volumes to a watching world. They are expecting retaliation and recrimination or at the very least, whining, but instead they get the love of Jesus lived out in the lives of his followers. Yes, everything communicates.

**Conclusion:** What are you communicating about your relationship to Jesus? Do the people we interact with see a fearlessness that comes from confidence in our God who saved us? Do they see unity as we work together? Peterson paraphrases this portion this ways, *Stand united, singular in vision, contending for people's trust in the Message, the good news, not flinching or dodging in the slightest before the opposition. Your courage and unity will show them what they're up against: defeat for them, victory for you—and both because of God.* Philippians 1:27b-28 (The Message).

Even as we show the world what they're up against – they are seeing that Jesus brings victory. Peter said it like this, *Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.* 1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)

Everything communicates – communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ in everything you do and say. Amen.