
Sermon Title: Are You Worth Imitating

Sermon Text: Philippians 2:17-20

Introduction

There once was an preacher who boarded an train en route to an city where he was to speak. He decided he would prepared for the event while he was on the train but an mother and three children who were sitting behind him would prevent him from doing so.

In fact one boy started climbing onto the back of his seat and when the preacher thought about putting the young boy in his place he bought him some candy along with his other brothers.

Hours went by and he was not able to prepare his message and so he decided he would tell the children some stories. While he was telling them some stories an man who was about to leave walked by with tears in his eyes and thanked him for the kindness that he showed the little ones.

He said the people on board have been saying that's real christianity but I don't understand said the preacher. All I did was tell them some stories but the man went on to tell him the lady behind him was their grandmother and they were headed to their mothers funeral.

During his sermon that week he urged the church to be careful how they traveled. Because others are watching! In other words, the world does not need another definition but another demonstration of christianity. Therefore we need to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world which means we are to let our light so shine before men so they may see our good works and glorify our father which is in heaven.

As the church we are to shine as stars in a dark world casting off the works of darkness and putting on the armor of light which means we are the lesser light of the greater light.

By the way when you have been born again you can't help but shine and yet there are so many who are not letting their light shine when the scripture says they are to let their light so shine before men that they may see their good works and glorify their father which is in heaven which means we are too...

Let It Shine!!!

Let It Shine!!!

Let It Shine!!!

In other words the world should be able to see the light of the lord through you which has been the theme of our text for the past several weeks. Let me stop here and ask you this question does the world see the light of the lord through you. Because at the end of the day that's the only thing that matters.

Dr. Charles Weigle composed the favorite "No One Ever Cared for Me Like Jesus." One day he visited Pasadena, California. Early that morning he had an opportunity to walk through some of the famous rose gardens when the full fragrance of the flowers filled the air. Later in the day he arrived at the hotel where a Bible conference was being held.

As he took his seat, a man turned to him and said, Dr. Weigle, I know where you've been. You toured one of our lovely gardens, for I can smell the pleasing aroma on your clothing. Dr. Weigle said, my prayer is that I may walk so closely with the lord that the fragrance of his grace will pervade my being. I want them to know by my words, actions, songs that I have been with Jesus.

Can others tell you have been with the lord? As Christians, the world should smell the fragrance of the father, and the aroma of the almighty upon your life. There is no greater testimony and this morning we are going to look at

three men who were the example of christ, three men who were not you average run of the mill christians.

Background

During this time, the apostle paul has been speaking about the example of the believer. He's urged the church to live out loud which means they were to live in such an way that's becoming of the gospel and yet there were some who were not taking his advice.

There once was an puritan by the name of thomas brooks who said example was the most powerful rhetoric which means the single most important aspect of spiritual leadership is an godly life to emulate and that has been the purpose of pauls writing for the past several weeks.

He has been teaching the church that what they do means more than what they say. They were the example of christ which means they were to do all

things without murmuring and complaining. So that they might be blameless and harmless the sons of god without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom ye shine as lights in the world holding forth the word of life that I may rejoice in the day of christ that I have not run in vain neither labored in vain.

Paul said you are the children of the most high and you need to act like it.

Our text this morning presents three men whose lives are exceptional patterns for godly living.

These three men were together during this time in rome. Paul was a prisoner in his own rented quarters. Though chained to an soldier, he was free to carry on his work unhindered.

Timothy, the apostle's son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2), had been with him for some time. Epaphroditus had been sent from the Philippian church to bring financial support for Paul and to minister to his needs.

They were knit together geographically, spiritually, and ministerially in a common cause. They were passionately and persistently devoted unto the cause of Christ and had even risked their health, their freedom, and their lives and I want to share their lives with you this morning. Because I believe their lives are worth imitating.

1. Paul: The Faithful Witness: 17-18

During his letter unto the church at Corinth, the apostle Paul urged the church to present their bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable unto God which is their reasonable service. Be not conformed to this world but be ye

transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of god. They were to pour out their lives as a drink offering unto the lord, but what does that mean?

What does it mean to be poured out as a drink offering unto the lord. In order to answer that question you must look back at the sacrificial system that took place in the old testament.

During the ceremony, the priest would prepare and present an sacrifice unto the lord. After they placed the animal upon the altar they would take wine and pour it on the sacrifice which caused smoke and steam to rise up in the temple.

In the ancient world the drink offering was commonly thought of as food for the gods. Therefore the people would give their gods food and drink from the

offering that was made unto them. Since the gods could not feed themselves they would need humans to, which is where the drink offering came into practice.

In other words they wanted their sacrifice to be pleasing and acceptable in the sight of god. Paul also speaks about being a drink offering unto the lord. Notice he spoke about being poured out due to the price he was paying for the sake of the gospel.

Contrary to what some suggest Paul was not speaking about death. Instead he was speaking of his current situation as a prisoner in Rome. He saw his life, not his death, as his ultimate act of sacrifice to the Lord.

One thing we know about Paul was how much he was willing to sacrifice for the cause of Christ which leads me to ask you, "how much are you willing to

sacrifice for the sake of the gospel." As I look at the church today, I am afraid there are so many who have not surrendered their all unto the lord and yet they expect the blessing of the lord.

I do not believe the lord will ever bless a church until they are completely sold out unto him which means they must be willing to be poured out as an drink offering unto the lord which was exactly what the apostle paul had done.

I know this because he said what thing were gained to me I count loss for christ. Yea I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of christ. For who I suffered the loss of all thing and do count them but dung that I may win christ.

Paul was all about christ. Several weeks ago we read where he said for me to live is christ and to die is gain. Paul considered himself an winner either way

which means whether he lived or died he was going to live out his life as an living sacrifice unto the lord. Paul was faithful unto death. Even when he knew he was about to die he said I am now ready to be offered up.

In other words I am now ready to be poured out as an drink offering and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course and I have kept the faith.

Henceforth, there is laid up for me an crown of righteousness which the righteous judge shall give to me on that day but not to me only but unto all them who love his appearing.

It did not matter to paul whether he lived or whether he died he was going to remain faithful unto the lord which means he was going to pour out his life as an drink offering unto the lord. He wanted to live an life that was pleasing

and acceptable in the sight of god. How many here can say the same thing?

How many here can say they have presented their body as an living sacrifice unto the lord which the scripture says is your reasonable service or your spiritual duty.

In other words, you must put yourself on the altar and say unto the lord I am all yours. How many here can say they have placed everything upon the altar? How many here can say they have surrendered all.

I do not believe we will ever see his best until we have given him our best but how many here can honestly say they have given their best unto the lord? I once read an story about an man who had the desire to take the gospel unto an place that had never heard the name of the lord.

During his research he discovered there was a Congo along the banks of a river that had over three million people who had never heard the gospel. During an evangelistic service one evening, there were twenty-five men who were commissioned to go and take the gospel to the ends of the earth but one year later only one showed up.

During his departure they warned him that where he was headed was very dangerous. In the early days of his ministry he had several close calls that almost cost them his life.

At the end of one voyage he wrote, we have been attacked by natives about twenty different times. We have been stoned and shot at with arrows and have been the mark for spears more than we can count but the Congolese were not the only danger the missionaries faced.

Along the bank of the river there were insects that were infested with an parasite and many who had contracted malaria, died. The congo was called the short-cut to heaven and during these voyages there were seventeen men who died along with his wife and so the mission society requested he return.

They even considered abandoned the work in the congo but he told them he would return with them or without them and he did and this time they made it to the mouth of the congo but it was worse than they expected. The crew abandoned him but he went on without them.

During this voyage he was shot by posionous darts and forced to return to england and when he returned they asked him how many were converted and he said none. He spent five years in the congo and had yet to speak to one native about christ but had lost his friends, his wife, and his children.

They mission society shut down the mission but that did not stop and so he decided to go as an independent missionary. He would build a boat with a metal bottom which would handle the pressure of the river.

During his final voyage he lost seven men due to poisonous darts and many others left him and yet he went on. Finally, he reached the Congo, but had developed malaria and the ones who were still with him urged him to return knowing they did not have the medicine to help him but he did not.

He continued to sail down the Congo preaching the gospel of Christ but due to the malaria he would soon have to return. During his voyage back it has been said that over ten thousand converts stood on the banks and sang with beautiful harmony all hail the power of Jesus' name.

He never returned. Seventeen years later after he started the mission work in the cameroon islands it was said there were one million converts who came to know christ. Why? Because one man said I surrender all.

11. Timothy: The Faithful Worker: 19-24

There was no one the apostle paul trusted more than timothy. When you read the scripture you discover there was an special bond between the two. Timothy was an native of lystra in the province of galatia.

His mother was jewish and his father was greek and probably an pagan. He was taught the scripture by both his mother and grandmother. Paul led him to the lord when he visited lystra during his first missionary journey and along with his spiritual maturity, his combined jewish and greek heritage uniquely qualified him to preach and minister the gospel among the gentile

world which was near and dear to the heart of Paul. Paul trusted him with both the word and the work of the Lord. Therefore he would send him unto the church so he might know the state of the church. I love this! Paul was on death row and what did he care about the most? He cared about the church!!!

He Cared About The Place Of God!!!

He Cared About The People Of God!!!

He Cared About The Program Of God!!!

Paul was concerned about the state of the church. Despite his hope to visit Philippi soon, Paul expected Timothy to have time to reach them and report back his assessment of their condition before the apostle was freed. He was confident that he would be encouraged by the report.

Because he wanted the Philippians to accept Timothy without hesitation he gave them a brief profile. The apostle highlighted seven characteristics for the church to emulate.

He was similar, sympathetic, submissive, sacrificial, single-minded, servicable, and seasoned. His character was similar to that of the apostle. There was no one else who was like him his greatest spiritual growth began when he started traveling and ministering with the apostle Paul.

He had the unique and enviable privilege of being the apostle's protégé. The scriptures say he was likeminded. They had one soul and one spirit which means they were on the same page.

The apostle never doubted his heart nor his integrity. He knew who he was and he knew what he was about. He was about the cause of Christ and that's

the reason he trusted him with this trip. He knew he would not lie about the state of the church. I don't know about you but it's a plus when you have people by your side you can trust. Paul trusted him! Why?

Because he was likeminded! By the way the goal of discipleship which has become the lost art of the church is to make disciples who make disciples. Over the course of time, Timothy came to think like Paul, relate to believers and unbelievers like Paul, evaluate ideas, trust in the Lord like Paul, and pray like Paul.

They had similar qualities of soul, similar passions, similar objectives, and similar zeal. Paul was saying to the believers in philippi what he had said to corinth an years earlier: "I exhort you, be imitators of me. I have sent to you timothy, whose my beloved and faithful child in the lord and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every

church". Paul did not send him because he was liked by him but because he was known by him. He knew who he was about and what he was about. He knew his work ethic.

He was instructed in the scriptures from childhood by his mother and grandmother. He highly regarded and respected by those who knew him. He was an hard worker which was the reason paul sent him.

By the way it takes hard work to build an church. It does not happen over night. It takes men and women who are willing to work hard and pay the price but we are living in an generation where people expect everything to be handed to them but you will never be blessed by god until you faithfully labor for him.

There was an man who came and said unto the lord I will go wherever you go and the lord said unto him the foxes have their nest and the birds have their

nest but the son of man does not have a place to lay his head. A second man came and said unto the lord I will go wherever you go but let me go and bury my father and the lord said unto him let the dead bury the dead but go and preach the gospel.

An third man came and said unto the lord I will go wherever you go but let me go and tell my family good bye and the lord said unto him no man who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is worthy of the kingdom of heaven.

Even though they were willing to serve the lord they were not willing to make the sacrifice which was required. They each had something they did not want to let go of. They each had something that held them back.

By the way, there are many in the church who are the same way. They say they want to serve the lord but they are not willing to make the sacrifice. They

are not willing to surrender their all unto god and yet the scripture says If
any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily,
and follow me.

There are so many who want to wear the crown without bearing the cross but
unless you bear the cross you will not wear the crown. In other words, you
must be willing to serve him...

No Matter What

No Matter Where

No Matter When

You must be willing to serve him! There once was a cobbler who dreamed that
the next day Jesus was coming to visit him. The dream seemed so real that he
got up vearly the next morning and hurried to the woods where he gathered

green boughs to decorate his shop for the arrival of so great a guest. He would wait all morning but to his disappointment his shop remained quiet except for a old man who limped up to the door asking to come in for a few minutes of warmth.

While the man was resting, the cobbler notice the old man shows were worn through. Touched, the cobbler took a new pair from his shelves and saw to it that the stranger was wearing them as he went on his way.

Throughout the afternoon, the cobbler wait but his only visitor was an elderly woman. He seen her struggling under a heavy load of firewood. He invited her into his shop to eat and saw to it that she had an nourishing meal before she went on her way.

As night began to fall, the cobbler heard an child crying outside his door. The child was lost and afraid. He went out and soothed the young child and took him by the hand and lead him into his home.

When he returned he was sad. He was convinced the lord returned while he was away. In his anguish he cried out why is it lord that your feet delay? Have you forgotten that this day was the day?

Then, soft in the silence an voice he heard: Lift up your heart for I kepy my word. Three times I came to your friendly door. Three times my shadow was on your floor. I was the man with the bruised feet. I was the woman who needed something to eat. I was the child who was on the street.

The scripture says and the king shall answer and say unto them: verily I say unto you inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these my brethren you have done it unto me.

Do we care about the orphans?

Do we care about the outcast?

Do we care about the outsider?

The ministry is about people and yet there are many who have forgotten that. Listen to me, there will come an day when you will meet someone who has an need.

When you do I hope and pray you will show them the love of christ and do what you are able to meet the need that is in their life. I hope and pray we never forget that ministry is about others.

In other words let nothing be done with strife and vainglory but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others.

Paul said I have no one likeminded who will naturally care about your state. He assured the church that Timothy would genuinely care about them. The word care expresses an burden for something or someone.

Paul natraully cared about the church and was confident that Timothy shared that concern. They were true shepherds, whose foremost concern was for the welfare of their sheep.

A true pastor will care about the sheep. They will not seek their own. In other words they will be more concerned about others than they are about themselves and yet when you read this epistle you discover there were some who did what

they did for their own good and their own glory. Despite Paul's presence, many preachers had become worldly and self-centered. They had left their first love but that should not be the case with the shepherd of the church.

The shepherd should care about the sheep. I believe the lord weeps when he sees sheep who do not have an shepherd. The scripture says unto the shepherd feed the flock of god among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy lucre but of an ready mind.

Neither being lords over gods heritage but being examples to the flock and when the chief shepherd shall you shall receive an crown of glory that does not fade away. By the way this crown is reserve for the pastor only and I want to receive that crown but I will not receive that crown unless I am an shepherd of the sheep.

I want to be an witness worth imitating!

I want to be an worker worth imitating!

I want to be an warrior worth imitating!

111. *Epaphroditus: The Faithful Warrior: 25-30*

There is not much we know about this man. What we do know is that he was an servant of the lord. He exemplifies the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of Christ that involves no public acclaim, no prominence, no high office, no great talents and no gifts.

Because they chose Epaphroditus to bring their gift to Paul and to minister to him. The Philippians obviously held him in the highest regard and trusted him implicitly.

Although he may not have held an official position in their church, they knew that he met the apostle's high moral and spiritual standards. He had the soul of a servant, going willingly to Rome to help Paul in any way he could for as long as he was needed.

His willingness to go to Rome while Paul was imprisoned shows great courage.

Although the apostle was allowed to live in his own rented quarters and had unlimited freedom to receive visitors.

He understood that this situation could change overnight. If Caesar decided Paul was indeed a threat to him as had been charged he would not hesitate to order his immediate execution and that would place his associates in danger.

Epaphroditus knew the risk he was taking was real which is the reason he was near and dear unto the heart of Paul and notice what the apostle Paul said

about this mighty warrior (v.25). By using the possessive pronoun my he manifested an deep and loving relationship with this remarkable man. The apostle was the most respected and beloved leader in the early church.

Yet he deigned to call an ordinary and virtually unknown believer not only his brother, but also his fellow worker and fellow soldier in the service of the Lord.

The apostle looked on Epaphroditus not as a subordinate but, in humility, as an spiritual warrior in the service of the lord. Paul now thought it necessary to send back to the church, the beloved brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier they had so lovingly sent to him.

For he longed after them. It was not that Epaphroditus was tired of serving Paul. He was not homesick or restless for an change of work or scenery nor

was he afraid of the harm that might befall him if he stayed longer. He was a faithful worker who would never leave a job uncompleted and a loyal soldier who would never leave his post in the face of danger but he was longing for his brothers and sisters in christ.

His heart was heavy because they heard he was sick and was worried about him. He was not concerned about his own condition. He was concerned about the condition of the church.

His heart was heavy which means he was experiencing deep anguish, anxiety, and turmoil. It is the same word that was used when the scripture says the lords heart was heavy when he prayed in the garden of gethsemane.

The scripture says he became so grieved and distressed that he cried out to my soul is deeply grieved even unto the point of death. He prayed with such intense

agony that his sweat became like drops of blood falling down upon the ground.

Epaphroditus's distress was not that extreme, but it was nevertheless very real and deep.

His heart ached because he had learned that the believers in Philippi had heard that he was sick and were worried about him. They heard he was so sick he was about to die but the lord had mercy on him.

In other words, the lord spared him when death was knocking on the door. For that reason Paul would send him back to the church. The Philippians had not asked that Epaphroditus be sent back to them.

His return was Paul's idea and was carried out solely on his initiative. He knew his loss would be their gain. Their happiness would bring him great relief and such is the remarkable power and reward of selfless love. Paul and the rest

of the believers were indeed of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose, doing nothing from selfishness or empty conceit but with in the lowliness of mind they esteemed each other better than themselves.

Epaphroditus was an mighty warrior who served the lord to the point of death. Therefore they were to honor him with the highest honor because he had served the lord unto death. The scripture says he did not regard his life which means he risked his life for the advancement of the gospel.

The word regard can mean risked which means to toss the dice. It speaks of voluntarily hazarding one's welfare and thereby exposing oneself to danger. In other words he laid it all on the line.

There have been many who have laid down their life for the cause of christ.

There have been many who have risked what they had in order for the gospel to be preach unto every nation.

I cannot help but think about missionaries who serve on foreign soil who are willing to die so one person can hear the gospel. They are the mighty warriors of the one true god and they should be held to the highest honor which leads me to ask:

Are we willing to lay down our lives for the cause of christ?

Are we willing to risk it all for he king?

King david was blessed to have some mighty men who would serve along side of him and one day the king said unto them oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of bethlehem which is by the gate. The scripture says

three of the mighty men broke thru the host of the philistines and drew water from the well of bethlehem and brought it to the king but the king would not drink it. Instead he poured it out unto the lord and said I will not drink from this cup. Is this not the blood of men who risked their lives for the king? How can I do such an thing.

I want to be an witness worth imitating!

I want to be an worker worth imitating!

I want to be an warrior worth imitating!

Conclusion

I want to be an example and not an excuse. We have given the world enough excuses why they should not serve the lord. I want to be an example why they should serve the lord. I want my life to be worth imitating.

There was an group of salesmen who went to an regional sales convention in
chicago. They assured their wives they would be home in plenty of time for
dinner but in their rush with tickets and briefcases one of the salesmen kicked
over an table that held a display of apples.

The apples flew every where and without stopping and looking they each made
it to the plane in time, all but one. He paused, took a deep breath, got in touch
with his feelings, and experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl whose
apple stand had been overturned.

He told his buddies to go on without him, waved goodbye, told one of them to
call his wife when they arrived at their home destination and explain his
taking a later flight. Then he returned to the terminal where the apples were
all over the terminal floor. He was glad he did.

The 16-year-old girl was totally blind! She was softly crying, tears running down her cheeks in frustration, and at the same time helplessly groping for her spilled produce as the crowd swirled about her, no one stopping and no one to care for her plight.

The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the applies, put them back on the table and helped organize her display. As he did this, he noticed that many of them had become battered and bruised; these he set aside in another basket.

When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl, "Here, please take this \$40 for the damage we did. Are you okay?" She nodded through her tears. He continued on with, "I hope we didn't spoil your day too badly."

As the salesman started to walk away, the bewildered blind girl called out to him, "Mister" He paused and turned to look back into those blind eyes. She continued, "Are you Jesus?"

He stopped in mid-stride, and he wondered. Then slowly he made his way to catch the later flight with that question burning and bouncing about in his soul: "Are you Jesus?"
