

**Sunday October 4, 2020 – Easter Hill United Methodist Church
World Communion Sunday**

**Bible Study – Philippians 3:4b-14
“That I May Gain Christ”**

Open with a word of prayer

Gathering Time (5-10 minutes). In pairs or groups of three, discuss the following: “What are the top three things you routinely grumble about?” (Pet peeves, annoyances, etc.)

Philippians 3:4b-14 Context: As Paul wrote from prison this letter to his beloved congregation in Philippi, he encouraged them to live their lives in imitation of Christ, who lived a life of humility and obedience to God. He urged them not to trust that there was anything they could do to merit God’s love, but to put their confidence in what God had already done for them: namely, to have been reconciled with them through the death and resurrection of Christ. In this week’s reading, he gives an account of how he came to consider his own merits as nothing, and to strive to “know Christ” (= follow his example of humble obedience), in order to share in the power and glory of his resurrection.

Read Philippians 3:4b-14

What touches your heart, what do you hear in the scripture, what questions do you have, or what doesn’t make sense to you in the story?

Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

Read Philippians 3:4b-14 again

Some reflection questions – Write down your thoughts or share your thoughts with the person or group you are with.

- What are you most prideful about? (A job, a project, your kids or grandkids, an achievement, etc.) Why do you think Paul, who had so much to be prideful in verses 5-6, describes it all as “rubbish” or “sewer trash” compared with gaining Christ?
- What did Paul hope to gain (v. 11)? What is Paul’s motivation to strive or press on toward this goal (v. 12)?
- When was the last time you were able to take Communion? When was the most memorable experience you’ve had with Communion?

- Assuming you can't partake in Communion, take this opportunity to reflect on the liturgy of the Communion. (If you do not have access to *The United Methodist Hymnal* or *Book of Worship*, [click here to access A Service of Word and Table I.](#)) For example, you might notice the movement of Gathering or Entering, Proclamation and Response, Thanksgiving and Communion, and the Sending Forth. Or another example might be the pattern of the bread being broken, the receiving of the elements, and the sending forth as similar to the pattern of discipleship – being broken before God, receiving God's grace, and being sent as God's witness. As you read through the various parts and litanies, what do you notice? What aspects can contribute to empowering us to press on? The next time you are able to receive Communion, you can be more intentional about experiencing the presence of Christ.
- How does partaking in Communion help us to hold fast to our faith and press on? [One response would be...In Communion, we experience the mysterious presence of Christ. That experience alone should bring assurance and should propel us in mission and ministry. We should approach Communion with reverence, confession, and expectation.]
- Imagine your Christian faith as running along a racetrack (v. 14), pressing on toward the prize of full salvation. Where would you situate yourself currently? At the starting blocks, still hoping to get into the race? just starting? near the end? somewhere else?

Read Philippians 3:4b-14 again

Closing Reflection Question

How is this scripture calling you to change, to see, to be or what might it be calling you to do?

Prayer (10 minutes). Each person prays sharing their answer the following statements:

I ask God for....

I thank God for.....

Sending Forth (2 minutes). After all, have shared, pray the closing prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the group or read the following prayer in unison:

God of Resurrection, you continue to woo us, draw us, invite us deeper into the mysteries of your love and grace. May practices like Communion, scripture reading, prayer, and communal conversation train us to see the riches of a relationship with Christ. Empower us to press on in being witnesses of your glorious kingdom. **Amen.**

And now we pray The Lord's Prayer....

Our Father who art in Heaven

hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,

on earth as it is in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation

but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power
and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.