

## Core Values: Christ-Centered

Philippians 2:1-11

### Our Core Values

I had said when I first arrived last summer that one of the things we would do early on would be to consider our core values. Throughout the fall the Administrative Council did just that.

We spent time in prayer and discernment and felt as though God was leading us to the following. We have said that we are:

- Christ-centered
- Biblically-based
- Discipleship-driven
- Community-oriented
- Mission-minded
- Family-focused

We will be hearing more about each of these as the next six weeks unfold.

### Fundamental Beliefs

Core values are the fundamental beliefs a person or an organization has. They are guiding principles that dictate behavior and help determine if a person or an organization is on the right path toward fulfilling its purpose in life.

Our core values are usually already inside us. They drive our thoughts, decisions, and behaviors. When something is valued we tend to live it out.

The whole process of identifying our core values as a church was really quite easy. We came at them readily.

Everyone on the Administrative Council will have to admit that we were pretty much in agreement on what we valued from the get-go. We just had to sharpen things a bit.

Shawn Lovejoy in writing about core values has this to say, “*We usually don’t select core values. They select us. They are the things we **actually** value. They come from our **core**, hence the name **core** values.*” Shawn Lovejoy

Core values are intrinsic to who we are. They form the very fiber of our identity—individually and corporately.

If we don’t identify them though, if we are not clear about what we believe, we are apt to move through life tossed to and fro by one prevailing wind after another.

That’s why I feel like it is so important for us to be settled about our core values. It will certainly be important when new people come and check us out. They’ll want to know who we are.

And we need to realize that most will check us out long before they enter these doors. That's why we need to be clear about what we value in everything we make public, including and especially our website.

More importantly, those same people are checking us out as we out those core values in the life of this community.

When it comes to living out the core values of this church you and I won't be able to say one thing here and then go and do another thing out there.

We'd do well not only to settle on what we value, but live as if that is truly the case.

How we spend our time and how we spend our money is a really good indicator of the things we value.

How we relate to others is as well, particularly in those relationships that can be quite challenging and, let's face it, all of us have those.

What we do when no one else is looking—for the good **and** the not so good—says a lot about what we value.

### **The Things We're Willing to Go to the Mat For**

Socrates stated centuries ago that the highest aim of life was to *"know thyself."*

Not to be glib or to shortchange all that he meant by that, knowing who we are goes a long way toward living life effectively.

When it comes to the church and a consideration of its core values we are really asking ourselves about those things we're willing to go to the mat for, those things that we hold to, regardless of the pressures to do otherwise.

John Wesley in talking about the essential doctrines of the faith had this to say, *"In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity."* John Wesley

The church is famous for *"majoring in the minors."*

When it comes to the *"non-essentials"* of the faith, we'd do well to offer grace. The *"essentials"* of the faith are another thing entirely. Unity around these things will only make us more effective.

Sometimes settling on what the *"essentials"* are can be the tough part. That's where a clearly defined set of core values can really help.

In the political arena, particularly given the rancor coming out of Washington these days there seems to be a conflicting set of values at play. No wonder nothing's getting done.

### **Fix Your Eyes upon Jesus**

Enough about values themselves, let's get on to one of our own stated values—one that stands front and center, one that is foundational to everything we do—that of being Christ-centered.

We have said about ourselves that *“we are Christ-centered and have a deep desire to follow Christ's leadership and do as he did.”*

We'd do well to follow his leadership. As stated in Hebrews 12:2, Jesus is the *“author and perfecter of our faith”* and because of that we'd do well to *“fix our eyes”* upon him.

### **A Word about Jesus**

After all, Jesus is the very reason the church exists. Without him what we do here is nothing more than a house of cards. With him we are given all power to influence the world to no end.

I am thankful that we have been claimed by Christ and stand in the long line of those who have put their faith in him.

Hear this about Jesus, he stood strong in the face of injustice, loved without fail, was willing to serve at every turn, and sought to do the will of his Heavenly Father.

Above all, Jesus brought salvation.

Hear what the scripture says about that. *“For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”* (John 3:17)

Jesus also came so we might have *“life and have it abundantly.”*

Again from the scripture, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full.”* (John 10:10)

Jesus' death on the cross brings forgiveness of sin and his resurrection from the grave offers the hope of glory beyond.

*“I am the way and the truth and the life,”* says Jesus. *“No one comes to the Father except through me.”* (John 14:6)

Given all of this, and so much more, we have every reason to be centered in Christ.

### **Just like God and Just like Us**

The Apostle Paul in writing in Philippians 2 shares a wonderful word about Jesus.

*“Though he was in the form of God, he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness.”*

*“And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.”* (Philippians 2:6-8)

There is no other like Jesus.

During AWANA last Wednesday we talked about Jesus being just like God **and** just like us—*“yet without sin.”*

That’s a tough thing for anyone to understand, much less a group of third graders.

Paul helps us with that though. He talks about Jesus being very much like God, yet he humbled himself, taking on human form so that we might have a Savior we can identify with

And as if that sort of humility wasn’t enough Jesus was obedient, even to his death on the cross, paving the way for the salvation of the world.

And as if to stamp all of that as true, God saw fit to raise him from the dead so that the way might be paved to eternal life.

All of this goes beyond comprehension save for when we experience him for ourselves.

I am thankful that that’s happened for me and because of that my life has been radically changed.

### **The Same Mindset as Christ**

Paul calls on those who have given their lives to Jesus to have the same mindset as he did.

We are to be humble like him, ready to empty ourselves so that he is better able to live through us.

We are to take on the nature of a servant, and like him, always looking for ways to offer the good news about the salvation he came to offer.

We are to be obedient, regardless of the costs, and in that the way is paved to abundant life.

### **Some Rubber Meeting the Road Issues**

Just preceding Paul’s great description of who Jesus is, he talks about some rubber meeting the road issues. He talks about what it’s like to have the same mind that was in Christ.

He talks about encouragement, comfort, fellowship, tenderness, and compassion. He talks about unity that has its foundation in a Christ-like love.

He challenges those who seek Jesus to heed his words about doing nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but rather valuing others to the extent that our own interests take a back seat to those of other people.

These things and so much more strike at what it means to be centered in Christ and we are challenged to live that out.

### **More and More like Jesus**

Methodists dare talk about what is called Christian Perfection.

It's not a sinless perfect, but a willingness to let God do his thing in our lives, to the end that we are become more and more like Jesus.

*"You are the light of the world," says Jesus, "A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house."*

*"In the same way, let your light so shine before others, so they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:14-16)*

Think of it, the very light of the world says that we are also the light of the world. That sort of thing only happens when we are centered in him.

### **Our Connect Card**

On the Connect Card in your pews you will find a place to check if you want to know more about what Saint John believes.

You can be well-assured that we believe in Jesus and *"have a deep desire to follow his leadership and do as he did."*

I had a friend years ago who was deeply dedicated to Jesus. You might say his life was *"centered on Christ."*

Another of my friends commented at the time that *"the name of Jesus was never far from his lips."* I've never forgotten that.

I pray that the same would be said not only of you and me, but of this church.