



Columbia, Missouri
The Worship of God • May 8, 2022



THE SCRIPTURE
Philippians 2:1-5; 12-12 (*The Message*)

If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand. Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself.

What I'm getting at, friends, is that you should simply keep on doing what you've done from the beginning. When I was living among you, you lived in responsive obedience. Now that I'm separated from you, keep it up. Better yet, redouble your efforts. Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is God's energy, an energy deep within you, God himself willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.

THE MESSAGE
"Loving"
Mark Briley

Statement of Fact. It is Mother's Day. I feel a bit like Dwight Schrute, a character on the famed sitcom, *The Office*. He was dry and serious and to the point – no room for fluff in life. Call it what it is. For example, this is what it looked like when he was in charge of

planning an office birthday party for a colleague. [**The Office video – It is your birthday.**]¹.

It is Mother's Day. Period. Statement of fact. And the tone of such a statement varies from person to person. Some of this makes today challenging. I know there are some who avoid church all together on Mother's Day because of the pain they associate with the day – with the relationship with their own mother or children. Sometimes it's painful because mom is no longer here... or never was. For others, there's pain because of a desire to be a mother, and such has not yet been possible for any number of reasons. For others – the loss of a child or the loss of relationship with a child is deeply painful. I just want to acknowledge this up front today as tough as it can be.

You're a dynamic person – layers to your reality and you don't simply sit here today as the cover of a Hallmark card. I think it's important to include every gamut of emotion on days like today.

I had a church member at a previous church I served, who was frustrated with me one Mother's Day that I made space to acknowledge the pain that many feel on this occasion. *"Can't we just be happy and celebrate all the great moms out there? Why do you have to be such a downer?"*

I understand that. And I love my mother so. She's a gem of a woman who taught me so much about faith and compassion and never allowing someone else to steal the joy in my life. I celebrate you, Mom, and know you'll be watching today. Love you!

I've got a Mother-in-Law who has shown me wholly other ways to mother, and I've learned unique gifts from her, too, that have shaped my life.

I bear witness every day to my wife who mother's our children with love and shows them things about passion and grit and confidence that are extraordinary.

We should celebrate our moms and the mother figures in our lives. *We shouldn't* unfairly put them on pedestals of perfection – we honor them by embodying the best of who they are in our own living. So yes, moms among us, we lift you up today and cherish the ways you carry the world on your backs. Without mother's, I'm convinced, the Church would have never survived. Jesus rose from the dead, yes, but it was his mom and the other Mary's that pulled the Church together and said, *"Hey... He's risen like he said and it's time to act like it... and get your feet off the coffee table!"*

¹ <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10155843862036648>

While our connection to motherhood varies for every person in this space today or those watching online – we do have a connection to moms in some way. I loved the one who was talking about her mom who always said, “*We DO NOT throw away perfectly good food in this house. We put the leftovers in Tupperware, put the Tupperware in the fridge, let it go bad, THEN throw it out.*”

Truth is... moms *are*. Period. Fact. And today... on this day set aside to celebrate moms, we wrap up our Stewardship Series entitled, “*Faithful, Hopeful, Loving,*” with a word about generous living, doing our part, and rising to be our best selves as many moms have faithfully led us to be.

The Apostle Paul had a mother. While some historians allude to some possible familial connections (*even connection to Herod’s family*), we don’t know anything for certain about his mother, but he *was*, so she *was*, too. His story was probably not unlike some of yours. Paul had climbed the ranks in his professional life with some prowess. He may have grown up with some privilege or maybe he had a mom with some grit or maybe any combination of things.

As we lean into Paul’s letter to the church folk at Philippi, considered by many to be his happiest letter of all – even writing from prison – we hone in on the second chapter where he writes almost with the plea of a mother: “*If I’ve taught you anything,*” he says. “*If my love has made any difference in your life; get along with your brothers and sisters.*”

It’s more than that, of course. It’s not an ask to simply tolerate or put up with each other. It’s a call to serve together. Put others first. Think of the whole above oneself. And show the world, what Paul called this “*polluted society,*” what a united people can do when they come together and follow where love leads.

I stand here today, wondering, if we could answer Paul’s plea, Broadway, rallying the best of ourselves to bring out the best in each other. Could we shock the world with love’s power? That option is ours. Do we understand that to be our assignment?

It was a big week for our beloved colleague and teammate – Adonica Coleman. Adonica is our director of community engagement at Broadway, but that’s only part of her powerhouse presence in this world. Mother of four amazing girls. Picked a decent dude to marry – 20-years ago this month actually. She serves on community boards across this city and A2D.² Her attention to detail event planning company was honored this week as finalist for Small Business of the Year in our city. So... just a little shout

² <https://www.a2deventdecor.com/>

out this morning to our colleague and sister who is staying on top of things like Jay-Z would say, *“treatin’ everythin’ like it’s your first project.”*

Because she didn’t have anything else going, she was a featured speaker at a leadership conference this week, and I had the privilege of slipping into the audience to hear her engage hundreds of leaders eager to lead better. She said the one thing a leader needs to know to lead well is simply this: *“Understand the assignment.”* She said in understanding the assignment, *“Good leaders know the way, show the way and go the way.”*

She schooled us in the way this phrase has become a big deal on social media. TikTok specifically. I’m not a TikTok-er, but I live with some people who are in-it-to-win-it. *“Understood the assignment”* has become a slang term used as a popular way to praise someone who is going above and beyond the standard expectation. According to the Urban Dictionary, *“understood the assignment”* is *“a phrase used when someone is giving it 110% ... whether it’s what they’re doing, what they’re wearing, or someone who is really on top of their stuff.”*

This is Paul’s question of the Philippian Christians. Do you understand the assignment? He says it right here and with clarity...

“If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ; if his love has made any difference in your life; if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart; if you care, if you have understood the assignment love requires – then do me a favor.” And then he lays out the assignment again: *“Agree with each other; love each other; be deep spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t shout louder on face book than every other voice that has their own experience to share. Put yourself aside and help others get ahead. Worry less about getting’ yours and help out.”* Doesn’t this sound like a mother’s wish for her family? Work at it together, fam. Paul says, *“When I was living with you, you were responsive to the assignment and now that I’ve parted, don’t forget the assignment.”* And then he adds, *“Better yet, double your efforts.”* And I can’t say it better than Paul, so I read it straight from verse 13: *“Be energetic in your life of salvation, reverent and sensitive before God. That energy is God’s energy, an energy deep within you, God willing and working at what will give him the most pleasure.”*

Like a mom, Paul says, *“Get along. Stay together. Change the world.”* At Broadway, we’ve discerned this assignment means we are to follow where Love leads. Love is a verb... an action... but Love (*capital “L”*) is also the proper name of God as shared with us in John’s letters. *“God is Love.”* If God is leading us... and we understand the assignment is to stick together, support each other, and let love lead us to change the world, then we need to let the great angst and frustrations that we let take front and

center fall away. It's not that we lose sight of those frustrations as sometimes love leads us tackle those issues. But Paul also gives us that gem that's been a theme verse for us in his Love Chapter, 1 Corinthians 13, where all that peripheral stuff will pass away while three lasting things remain: faith, hope and love. We've got to be that faith, hope and love in the world.

Pope Benedict said, "*The one who has hope lives differently.*" It's true. Father Braun, one who has given his life to the formation of faith in the next generation says, "*Letting the world frustrate us is one of the greatest signs of a weakness in the virtues of [faith, hope and love]*" that we claim will outlast anything.

That's why my momma always said, "*Don't let anyone steal your joy.*" And Lord knows so many are willing to cut you down... take your knees out... tell you why it won't work, why faith is dead, why we might as well throw our hands up and forget the whole assignment.

Do you know someone who's trying to steal your joy right now? And I'm not saying all of life is happy go lucky all the time. I've named the pain already in this message. And you know it, too. Somebody you love... and maybe that someone you love is you... is going through hell right now.

I have a dear and beloved friend who was told by a surgeon, "*The other specialist says if I do this surgery, you'll die. If I don't do this surgery, you'll die. What do you want to do?*" That's serious.

Another's family is imploding – the stress has become too much. The decisions have cut deep. What are they gonna do?

Another is riddled with anxiety, calls me, and says, "*I just need to be on the phone with you right now.*" Okay. So here we are, right?

The thick of it. And Paul says, "*Hang on. You've got an assignment to fulfill, and you can rise through even this.*" And do you know what. I'm a believer. I've seen it. I held hands with that friend this week, who had the surgery and didn't die, and if I'm honest... given the things his heart poured out to me... he is more alive than maybe anyone else I know right now. Life challenging? 100%. But does he know the assignment – absolutely. I shook hands with his surgeon this week who is also a friend. He was walking his dogs, and we connected in amazement of how precious life really is. That family? There's a cease fire... at least for now. I don't know the outcome, but even a pause means we're all considering the assignment. The anxiety? It comes and goes. And strategies are being created and practiced. And love is leading forward.

Broadway – this is what it means to be energetic in our salvation – reverent and sensitive before God as Paul names so well. We’re a faithful, hopeful, and loving congregation – always have been – no matter the ups and downs of any particular season. And I’ll admit, there were tests to our resolve – mine and ours together – during these last couple of years; a time when understanding the assignment meant putting tape on the floor every six-feet to keep everyone at a safe distance. And we know that was just a small symbol of the angst. But we know the assignment. To love God and love our neighbor. To be the presence of Christ in an ever-changing society. To be people of joy and not another grumpy spirit in the community – there are enough of those. How will love lead us forward this year? Paul says, come together. Bring your best. Do the work. And that’s what we’ll do.

Our faith-formation team is more eager than ever to partner with families to help lead our kids into a healthy faith: Kate, Sarah, Crystal, Taby, John – they are eager and on it. Let’s rally around them and support their efforts with kids, teens, and adults, who need to get together to learn and sharpen and support and grow. It takes a village, and these leaders understand the assignment.

You want to be a force in this community? Jane Williams, amazing director of *Love Columbia*, spoke at our Seasoned Spirits gathering this week, and she said, “*Do you know your reputation in the city, Broadway?*” And she proceeded to share of the impact... for decades... that you have made in this city because you knew and were willing to accept the assignment of where love called you to lead along the way.

Adonica is here to grow this witness in this new day and this new time in new ways – she understands the assignment – let’s get behind her. We’ve got a team of staff and lay leaders who are amped to help lead Broadway into the assignment of tomorrow’s church – an assignment that may call for new methods even as it is offered under the same spirit of those who accepted the assignment for the last six decades before us.

Will you join us? If you’re in it to win it with us at Broadway, I pray you’ll join my family and many others in submitting your pledge cards this week so we know just how broad our reach can be in this coming fiscal year. I was inspired by a Broadway friend who sent in his pledge from a rehab facility this week – “*It was on my heart, and I didn’t want to miss getting it in.*” Another who turned in a pledge said, “*We haven’t been able to be physically in the church for almost three years but still feel so cared for and such a part of what Broadway is about.*”

Amazing. Every gift matters and helps us know how to budget faithfully and responsibly. It’s part of our call as a church – to steward well the assignment. A big part of that is understanding what resources we must do so. It’s why my mother gave me weekly envelopes as a kid to tithe from my weekly allowance of \$5. I put those two

quarters in an envelope every week, showed up to worship, and put it in the offering plate as sign and symbol that I was part, I was in, and we were gonna fulfill the assignment together. Will you claim that now in your own life? Will you embody the best of our mother figures who surely shaped Paul to say, “*Get along. Come together. Change the world*”?

No matter who you are or what you’re facing right now, sit with the question, “Do you understand your assignment?” Do you get what you’re called to do? Who will you help rise through the pain and into the flow of their own calling? This is ours to do, friends. And it is Mother’s Day. Statement of fact. And Church... we are family. Love has led us this far and love will lead us forward.

May it be so.

SONG OF FOCUS
“Faithful, Hopeful, Loving”

WORDS AND MUSIC BY ED VARNUM

1. You have made us in your image, a relationship to share.
You have given us your presence, nurtured in your loving care.
You have offered us a way to communicate in prayer.
And you promise us that you'll always be there.

2. You have called us through the prophets, you have saved us through the Son.
You have given us your Spirit to unite us, make us one.
You have sent us to this world of need, reaching out, forsaking none.
And now, our God, we pray, “Your will be done!”

Refrain:

We would be faithful, this is our prayer today in faithful, living witness to your Way.
Live in your presence, lifting prayer in all we do to be faithful,
always hopeful, loving, too.

3. You have called us through the prophets, you have saved us through the Son.
You have given us your Spirit to unite us, make us one.
You have sent us to this world of need, reaching out, forsaking none.
May we be faithful in all you’ve begun.

Refrain:

We would be faithful, this is our prayer today in faithful, living witness to your Way.
Live in your presence, lifting prayer in all we do to be faithful,
always hopeful, loving, too.

BROAD HEARTS BROAD MINDS BROAD REACH