**Sermon Based Small Group: Philippians 1:1-11**

**Unlimited?**

**Introduction**

* You get to self-define yourself for this exercise. For those a bit older, when was the first time you realized that your body was no longer 18.
* For those a bit younger, talk about a time when you realized you were in a situation over your head.
* Does life have limits? How could you answer this positively … and negatively?

**Reviewing the Teaching**

* What stood out to you as a potentially significant takeaway in this week’s teaching?
  + Why did it stand out?
  + How does it relate to you in your life situation now?
* As we study Philippians keep in mind where Paul is. Where is he? Put yourself in his shoes. Could you write the things he wrote in that situation? In Christ, Paul had a changed mindset, a new way of looking at life, that give him a different perspective. What was the difference?
* What is the Gospel? This is often hard for us to define. How does it affect the limits we feel in life? Who did what for whom? What do we do?
* Sunday’s sermon had three key points. Is there one point that touched you?
  + ***Embrace your Gospel identity.***
  + ***Own your Gospel Partnership***
  + ***Grow in Gospel Character***
* Verses 6 to 11 describe Growing in Gospel Character, becoming more like Jesus. What did you think of Grant Richison’s statement that, “God will either work in us or He will work on us, but He will finish the job.”
* Pastor Mel suggested that there are three ways that God can work in us.
  + What is the most loving thing?
  + What is the wisest thing?
  + What is the most self-less thing?
  + Is one of these a challenge for you?

**Digging Deeper**

* In verse 1 Paul addresses the people of Philippi as saints. What are some ways we use the word “saint” in everyday language? What does Paul mean by the word saint? How are we “set apart”? How do people become saints?
* Why is it important to be special … to Jesus? How is that different than simply being special? What did Jesus do to make you special? How did you feel about the comment that “being special” ultimately makes everything about me? Being a saint - IN JESUS - connects us to God, to the whole. Richard Rohr wrote, “When you are connected to The Whole, you no longer need to protect or defend The Part. You are now connected to something inexhaustible” ... (or limitless).
* Bohannon writes, “When you’re connected to The Whole, you will realize that the story you are partaking in and coauthoring is SO VERY BIG that you can no longer believe in a story *so small* that it has you in the very center. ***You will become more enamored with the Bigness of the Beautiful Story*** ***and what we can accomplish together than with your own individual performance in it.”***
* How do you react to this idea where our lives focus around a big, beautiful story rather than around ourselves? Think through some of the results of this change in thinking.
* Pastor Mel described Paul as happily, permanently indentured, as a lackey to Jesus. Philippians 2:3 builds on this idea. Is there such a thing as a happy slave?
* We might agree with this idea of identity and service rationally. But there is a fight against this that rages deep inside us. Paul addresses the letter “to all the saints in Christ Jesus.” “In Christ” is a term Paul uses, more than 100 times, to describe the whole of the Christian life. Read 1 Corinthians 1:30 and 31 and Acts 17:28. How does Paul describe average in 1 Corinthians 1:26? Our identity does not depend on who we are, but on Who we are in, “in Christ”. How do these verses describe who we are in Christ.

**Applying it to Life**

* Verses 3 to 5 describe “Own their Gospel partnership.” Paul offers a prayer of Thanksgiving for the Philippians for this. Our church community life is not about what I want, but about partnering to help others embrace their gospel identity.
* How can you fit into the I-4 challenge? Influence, Invite, Include, Invest

**Prayer**

* Pastor Mel concluded his message with 2 questions. As you pray, ask God for the insight to answer them:
  + In what way am I allowing my limits to define ... control ... limit me?
  + In what way might my limits be inviting me to grow?
* Think of someone to invite. Pray for them. Ask God to help you love them enough to invite them.