

Advent Thankfulness

- 1) For Our Fellow Believers
- 2) For God's Work Among Our Fellow Believers

Thank You Cards

- TY card. Hllmrk; reg: simp out, blank in. I'm TY card guy; how raised. If smone gift: thnk in pers, call, write. For bday & Xmas, Grma L: Boxcar Chldrn; taught call, thank. Married: list of gifts so write TYs. Not saying wrong not to write TY, or evone has to do. It's just smthng I like do, say TY.
- Bk Php esntly TY card, from Paul, to bels in city Phlpi. Very beg lettr: vs. 3. They'd sent Paul a gift: not bec bday/Xmas, but in prison; arrstd for prchnng Gos. He: their Pr; loved him; so sent him gift of \$/suppls thru ch memb Epfrdts. If you here Thnksvgv, remem les fr Php 4: **"I have recvd full pymnt & have more than enough. I am amply suppld, now that I have recvd from Epfrdts the gifts you sent" (18)**. Even adds, **"Even when I was in Thslnca, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need" (16)**. So the Phps had sent gifts to Paul. And now, from prison cell, thinks re fellow bels, sends TY card – not just for \$/suppls – but thanks God for them, his frnds, ppl he loves, membs of ch who share his Xian faith; AND thanks God for the Gos work God was accmplshng in their hearts.
- I think we can learn les fr Paul this Adv season. In these busy days before Xmas, when evone's so focsd on gft givng/gettng, let's learn a les of AdvTh. Let's looks arnd snctry at fel bels seated arnd us (& think re those not here this service) – ppl we love, membs ch who share Xian faith – and let's be filled w/AdvTh, for same reasons Paul was: for our fel bels, and for God's work among our fel bels.

For Our Fellow Believers

- Paul's TY card begs: vs. 3-5. Obvsly loves these ppl; thnkfl for; very emotnl wrds. And remem: prsn; feeling lonely/nostlge. So when thinks re Phps & prays for, mind filld w/prec mems time among them:
 - When first got Phlpi, worshpd w/small group bels down at river.
 - Met wlthy busnss wmn, Lydia, purp clth. She befrndd/supprtd/housed; he baptzd her/fam.
 - Then time in Phlpi when Paul drove evil sprt out servant girl. Arrstd/beatn/thrown in jail for it. During night, as singng hymns in jail, earthqk broke doors open. Jailer about to kill self; thought prisnrs escapng. Paul: no, we're all here. That night Paul shared Gos, baptzd fam.
- So: lot good mems from time in Phlpi; really loved bels there. Vs. 3-5. Later, vs. 7b; 8. End letter, calls them: **"My bros/siss, you whom I love & long for, my joy & crown" (4:1)**. This whole letter just bleeds w/emotion, love, thankflns. Paul is thnkfl for his fel bels.
- Are we? Thnkfl for fl bels? Do we love oa here at SJ? Thnkfl for oa? We: cong of 865 mmbrs; big fam. Certnly many you are frnds w/eo; and natrl to have stronger conxns w/sm than others. But do we as cong love, chersh, supprt, pray for, thnk God for fel ch membs, like Paul & Phps did? Or is this ch smply a place where come, get Gos, & go; don't really think re ppl here? Or wrse, do ppl here annoy you (don't really like); but suppsd come ch, so do; just put up w/them? I'm not making accusation. But when I read this les/letter, see how Phps & Paul truly loved oa, supprtd eo, thanked God for oa, I wonder if that's us. And if not us, how could we make that be us?
- Now I want you know: I've seen so much love in this cong. You genrsly give offrngs, not only for main mission, but also spcl projects: hymnal, cap projects, sanctry refurb. You love Xmas giving tree; last yr had so many gifts cards; helped so many ppl! I witnssd (shared in!) your hrtfl farewll to PDW, when left for NU. And you have loved, cared for, supprtd me/fam over yrs, cntlss times/ways: w/wrds enc thru diff times, and w/abndnt gifts/support (at Xmas, Pr Apprctn, thruout this pastrl vacncy). And I thnk you; want you know I love you; care for ev one you; thnk God for you; as Paul: vs. 7b. And if day comes I need take call, that'll be hard day; and I'll always love this cong, like Paul loved Phps. For that mtr, PNH is saying goodbye his cong; he's going stay thru Xmas, then move here to Burl. I'm sure it's hard for him leave those ppl he loves. When PNH arrives here, let's show him our love; let's embrace/welcome him/fam w/encrgmnt, patience, gifts, a joyful welcome. Let's keep showing love to oa: to our fel ch membs, to our calld wrkrs. Let's do what Paul in bk Rom: **"Rejoice w/those who rejoice; mourn w/those who mourn; live in harmny w/oa" (12:15-16)**.

- I think we do. But Stn is constntly at work w/in Xian cong to create divsn, strife, anger, discontnt. He loves it when ch membrs are bitter towrd oa, angry w/ea, bec that creats big distrcn, takes focus off J, in wrshp, mtgs, convrstns. It's really easy find fault in others, dwell on their suppsd shrtcmngs, make mnts out molehlls, instd of loving oa. For ex: if Dem, love fel ch membs Reps; R/D? If mask wearer, love aren't; if don't, do? If you're up here at ch all time, doing all kinds work, volntrng on all kinds cmts/projects, love those not able help out at ch as much? If not able help out at ch as much, do apprct work others in cong are doing? If you're ev Sun worshpr, love those membrs who rarely come; love them enough to enrg them return? Or just write them off as delqnts? And if you don't come ch very often, you love those who do? If don't have kids in school, love school fams? If you're school fam, love those ch fams who are financy supprtnng school? See, it's really easy to set up an us/them, create artifcl divsns among us, even though we're united in our Luth, Xian faith. But that's not how it was between Paul & Phps. They loved oa, were thankful to God for oa. **Vs. 3-5a; 7b; 8b**. This Adv, I encourage you: to be filled w/AdTh for oa, for your fel ch membrs, for your fel bels.

For God's Work among Our Fellow Believers

- AND to be thankful for God's work among your fel bels. Here, I want zero in on **vs. 6**. He: Lord. Gd wrk: how he created faith in J in your hrt. Day/CJ: when returns on Last Day. And the carrying it on to compltn means: God will stick w/you; not going abandon you. Thru W&S, he will preserve you in faith. God is a finisher. He finishes what starts. Doesn't leave project undone; doesn't leave prom unfulfilled. Always does what says he's going do. God is a finisher.
- And this is proved in Bible again/again. In Mal les, God prmisd a msngr (JB), who'd prepare way for Msgnr/Cvnt (J) – in Gos see JB preparing way for Lord. God prmisd Abrhm descndts as numrs stars sky – just think how many Xians in wrld today, and how many smday in hvn. God prmisd David: his descndt king over Israel – Gabe told Mary, her Son sit on throne father David. Thru Isa, God prmisd: virgin give birth son, Immanuel. Thru Micah, God prmisd: a ruler come from O little town Bthlhm. All this shows: God is finisher, a promise keeper.
- But greatest prom God ever kept, first prom made to mankind: in Eden, prmisd send Sav from sin. And in fullness of time, Xp was born. J came from hvn be our Sav. Obeyed God's coms perfly where we failed; took all our sins upon self, carried them to cross, where bore our punshmnt, cancl'd our guilt. Then rose fr dead and asc'd into hvn, where rules all things as our hvnly king. God kept his word and gave us J. Also gave us faith to bel in J. That's what Paul means when: **vs. 6a** (gave you faith in J), **vs. 6b** (preserve you in faith, thru W&S) **vs. 6c**.
- This: a prom for you, and for your fel bels! God: at work among our fel bels, ppl seatd arnd you! This cong isn't just relgs club or theolgel clique. We: blood bought bels in Xp, who share common faith in J; we are partners in Gos; we have fellwshp w/oa. Jesus died/rose for you and for ppl seated arnd you. Man, if anything that'll work an att/grat in hrt, it's lookng arnd, seeng God's work among fel bels.

Advent Thankfulness

- I'm going keep writing my TY cards, bec when smone gives me gift, I want them know I apprct it. When Paul in prison, apprctd gift the Phps sent him thru Ephrdts. So wrote them TY letter. But even more than \$/supplies, Paul was thnkfl for the ppl (their love/supprt), and most imprtly, for God's work among those ppl. This Advent, as we buy/give/receive gifts, let's not forget to be thnkfl: not just for gifts, but for oa for ppl seated arnd us. **Vs. 3; 7b; 8b**. Let's make that our att/grat this Adv season: thnkfl for our fel bels, and thnkfl for God's work among our fel bels. This will be our AdTh.

Philippians 1:3-8

³I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

⁷It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.