

To Be Where Jesus Is

Scripture Reading — Philippians 1:22-26

I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. — Philippians 1:23-24

Paul had never been with Jesus like the other apostles, most of whom had been Jesus' disciples. He met Jesus in a vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). And he was eager to experience having full life with Christ in his presence forever.

Yet he loved the life he had here on earth, and he loved the Philippians and all others who needed to hear about and grow in the love of Christ. So Paul was torn, and he sensed that his going to be with Jesus would wait. He hoped to return to Philippi to enjoy the people's fellowship and deepen their faith.

Paul lays out his heart here for all to see. And what we see is love, love, love. Love for God, love for Jesus, love for the gospel, love for sisters and brothers in the church. An old song says, "They will know we are Christians by our love." Certainly we see Paul's Christlikeness in his lavish love.

One of the saddest things I have ever heard about a pastor was that a person said, "That pastor just does not love his people." Unsurprisingly, ministry derails where there is no love. By Paul's example, we see again the importance of love for God and love for neighbor at the center of ministry. Jesus stated that these two loves summarize the whole will of God. Paul understood that, and we can too.

Prayer

Help us to revel in your presence, dear God, both on this earth and in the life to come. May we love others from the overflow of our ardent love for you. In Christ, Amen.

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