

Pentecost 22, 2008  
Good Hope Lutheran Church  
Philippians 4: 2

In today's second lesson, from Philippians chapter 4, St. Paul turns his attention to two women he knew in the church, and in verse 2 Paul simply says to them, "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche: be of one mind in the Lord."

The Lord be with you. And let us pray:

Heavenly Father, there are many small differences between people—differences in custom and tradition, personality and opinion—and because we are sinners, these differences can become the source of friction, and conflict. Help us always to see beyond our small differences to the greater truth of our shared calling in Christ, and unite us all always under the gentle rule of your Son Jesus, in whose name we pray, AMEN.

I have to hand it to the members of this church, who are brave enough to volunteer to be lectors each week. The lector of course is the person who comes up to the front to read the Bible lessons on Sunday morning, and when you volunteer to read the lessons in church you just never know—how many weird Bible names are you going to get stuck with that week. So **Bob/Laura**, thank you, fortunately for you there were only two weird Bible names this week, and you did pretty well with them.

Euodia, and Syntyche. Euodia, and Syntyche, these are women's names. And evidently, if we may read between the lines here in the text, these two women were having a little bit of an argument. Now the first thing you need to know here, their names, what they mean. Euodia. The E-U at the front of the name is like the E-U in eulogy, a good word at a funeral; or euphoric, a good feeling one gets sometimes. E-U, it's Greek—it means good, upbeat; happy. Odia is Greek for a road, or a path. So, in my translation, Euodia means, Happy Trails. That would be this woman's name in English—Euodia, Happy Trails. On the other hand, Syntyche. The S-Y-N is like what you see at the front of the word synonymous, for instance. S-Y-N is Greek, meaning with; with. Tyche is plain old Greek for fortune, or luck, so this gal Syntyche, her name in my translation means, With Any Luck. So here in Philippians 4 you're having a little argument between Happy Trails, and With Any Luck. And we are left to imagine, what the argument must

have been like:

“This is how I think the hymnals should be arranged in the pew. With Any Luck, you’ll see it my way.”

“Well I think the hymnals have to be arranged *this* way. And if you see it some other way, well, Happy Trails.”

Well I never! And another thing, it’s cold in the church. With Any Luck you’ll turn up the heat.”

“It’s not cold, it’s just right, and anyway we’re on a tight budget around here. Don’t believe me? Then Happy Trails.”

And back and forth, and back and forth, Happy Trails and With Any Luck. Angry; proud and intolerant; dismissive of one another. And if you’d ask one of them, What’s going on here? Well, each one of them would say “I’m totally innocent. I am innocent, I’m just behaving like any decent self-respecting Christian should.” So, they were not only angry, they were incapable of admitting they were angry. They were not only proud and intolerant and dismissive, they were blind. They were willfully blind, able to see the fault in another—but not able to see the same fault, in themselves.

Fast forward 2000 years to today, where the names have changed, but the game remains the same. Names have changed, the game is the same, our language is different today. But our attitudes and actions and willful intentional blindness is exactly the same. You have been angry. You have been angry *this past week*, and probably thought at the time you were totally justified. Were you? Can you maybe put yourself into the other person’s shoes, and see it their way? Can you put yourself for a moment into God’s shoes, and see yourself as He must see you? Our attitudes can be proud and intolerant, our words disdainful and dismissive—do we really mean to think that way? Do we really mean to act and sound that way? Is that what we want, are we not listening to ourselves? Is any slight you have suffered this week, worth the reaction you gave it.

Granting for a moment that you are right now sitting next to a whole bunch of sinners, and that

you work with a bunch more sinners, and that the school and the concession stand and your neighborhood and US 68 are all filled with sinners too, yes they are. Still. Can you not look at them for a moment. And just look at yourself. Attitudes words and deeds that are angry, proud, intolerant, dismissive. Dismissive, of those for whom Christ bled and died to welcome and to save.

Names have changed, language differs. Back then, Paul looked at Euodia and Syntyche, and sighed, and said Adelphai. Sisters. Adelphai kai adelphoi. Sisters and brothers. Agapatoi, beloved. Agapatoi teknoi theou, beloved children of God. We know each other's names—Bob and Laura and Joe and Jessica. We know His name too, it's still Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. And with the name, comes a new identity, a new person, forgiven by God. Redeemed by Jesus, who died and rose again. Changed, in attitude, and word and deed. Destined for a place forever in heaven, you are, destined for heaven. So is the sinner next to you, by the way. May we remember that, may we always know and recognize our identity as agapatoi teknoi theou—beloved children of God. And may it show.

In the name of Jesus Christ, AMEN.