Being the Church in Christ: Wisdom from Pastor Paul

(The Brentwood Sermon Series for 2015)

Memorize & Ponder Text – Philemon 1:15-16 (Full Reading – Philemon 1:8-16) Week of Oct 18-25, 2015

Strange Brothers

Philemon 1:15-16 (NRSV)

So if you consider me your partner in any way,
welcome him as you would welcome me.
If he has wronged you in any way,
or owes you anything,
charge that to my account.
(Philemon 1:15-16)

Throughout 2015, the Christian community at Brentwood Presbyterian Church will be considering how to be the church in Jesus Christ, guided by the wisdom of Pastor Paul. We invite you to **listen** for what the Spirit is saying in the text, then **question** how those insights might change the ways you see things and act in the world. Share your thoughts during the week on the meaning the Spirit creates for you in this text by posting a comment on our website – www.brentwoodpc.ca.

A Provocative Pondering

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us provoke one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together ... (Hebrews 10:23-25a)

As we mentioned last week in our Memorize and Ponder, Philemon was a slave-owner. This short letter is very personal. Paul pleads with Philemon to accept his run-away slave as a brother in Christ and welcome him back as if the slave, Onesimus, were Paul.

I hear strong hints of the Good Samaritan parable here. Love and nourish the slave, the stranger, the outsider. That is the nature of the new social reality that is the Commonwealth of God.

We live today in the midst of a social and political rhetoric that seeks to divide our communities through fear and violence. Such strategies are simply not consistent with following Jesus.

All other human beings are brothers and sisters in Christ. That is how they should be seen and treated. I don't see any other way of being faithful to the Gospel.

I'm not saying this is easy. Fear and anger are deeply rooted in our brain patterns. But our brains do work in a way that allows for considered choice between stimulus and response. That's what we need to practice, one conversation after another.

And, for Christians, that consideration is always focused on how we bless others as God has blessed us.

I'll be pondering that this week. I hope you join me.

Here's the question again:

How do I bless others and God has blessed me?