

## A Good Question

The question was (to paraphrase), what Bible passage has continued to inspire you most? The three remaining candidates for bishop each had different answers: the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8 captured one candidate's imagination; another candidate kept centered with Micah 6:8 and Matthew 25; the third recalled how visiting the Holy Land gave new meaning to Jesus' praying and sweating "like blood" in Gethemane in Luke 22.

Along with the rest of the people in the auditorium at Augustana College, Harry and Lois Grueneberg and I listened intently. Undoubtedly this was the most exciting part of our time in Rock Island, the lengthy (five-ballot!) process of electing the synod's next bishop. Already at this point we had been through three rounds of voting, leaving three remaining candidates for a question-and-answer period.

Some of the pre-selected questions had been quite practical (e.g., how would you do/encourage/enact a specific thing as bishop) and thus were not things most of us in the audience had considered for ourselves. But the present question was different, more personal and universal, inviting each of us to consider along with the candidates what her or his answer would be. In fact, I was a little surprised that my answer popped into my head almost as soon as ELCA Secretary Chris Boerger finished reading the question aloud.

For me it has to be Philippians 2. In perhaps his last extant letter, Paul is encouraging his audience to look to Christ as the model for humility and love for others:

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5–11 NRSV)

Every time I read this passage I am inspired in a new way. Here in a few powerful words is the good news of Christ giving up everything for us. Here also Paul makes the connection between the humility of Christ's human body and the humility his body the church must show among its members and toward neighbors. Whenever I'm tempted to "selfish ambition or conceit" (2:3), Paul's words are for me especially. Whenever I doubt that Jesus has earned our salvation, Paul's words are for me. Whenever my life of prayer seems strange or difficult, Paul's encouragement to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12) lets me know I'm on well-trod ground.

So Philippians 2 is mine; what's yours? Of our rich, varied scriptures, what passage do you find yourself returning to again and again? Email me at [pastorscott@shep61.org](mailto:pastorscott@shep61.org) and let me know! And come to adult forum on Sunday 17 July to hear much more about what Harry, Lois, and I experienced at the synod assembly!