

Tracy Daub  
4/7/19--University Presbyterian Church  
Philippians 3:4b-14

## HOW TO WRITE A RESUME

The goal of writing any resume is to promote yourself--to highlight your education, your work experience, your accomplishments, your awards. You want to write a resume in such a way that your best qualities shine forth so that you will stand out above all the other candidates for a potential job. Resumes, however, are not only crafted for job interviews. Throughout our lives we will have many occasions where our credentials and accomplishments will be presented: on college applications or for securing a loan or applying for a house or apartment. If we are the recipients of some kind of award, our resume credentials--such as our career, our community service, our accomplishments--are likely to be divulged at the awards ceremony. When we die, our obituary becomes a kind of resume of our lives and our achievements.

But we also cite our resume credentials or those of other people in small, ordinary moments of our daily lives. You meet someone for the first time and in the course of the first few minutes of the conversation you are likely to ask one another, "Where do you work? Where did you go to school? Where do you live?" And from these few questions, we learn a great deal about the person's background, income, education, social status. We share resume details about other people in routine conversations: "Oh, he works as a Vice President at M and T," or "she is an attorney at that big downtown law firm." Perhaps you enjoy a certain status in your church because your grandfather was one of the founders of the church or your mother donated the money for the organ. And these little resume details get dropped and revealed in the course of our ordinary lives.

The Apostle Paul shares with the congregation in Philippi his own resume credentials. And what an impressive resume it is. Paul's resume includes a notable list of achievements and qualifications for a Jewish man of his day. He lays them out in this letter: he was circumcised on the eighth day as dictated by the Jewish law, a member of the tribe of Benjamin, he was a Pharisee--making him not only a respectable Jewish religious leader but a member of the group most concerned with proper interpretation of the Jewish law, and he was someone so consumed with maintaining Jewish law and traditions that he actually was a persecutor of early Christians until he was converted to Christianity through an encounter with the risen Christ. What Paul lays out in this letter is a resume filled with credentials of the most dedicated of Jewish men. By the standards of his day, it would have been a most impressive resume.

But Paul says that he considers this list of accomplishments, BS. Our reading today translates the word as "rubbish" but in the Greek the word actually conveys a stronger meaning, that of excrement. In other words: BS. All his efforts to make himself worthy, to be right with God through his own efforts at righteous living or behaving, to be valued in society through what he did or accomplished, all those things that once filled him with pride in himself, the things that he used to boast about he now considers BS. Because after Paul comes to know Christ, he realizes that something altogether different now tops his resume. What stands written across the top of Paul's resume are not *his* credentials but God's grace. Being recipients of God's grace is the most important qualification that tops all of our resumes.

Grace is a word that carries a lot of different meanings. When we talk about God's grace, I like to think of it as this mashing together of God's love and of God's forgiveness. God's love and God's forgiveness of you and me come together to make up grace. And what Paul emphasizes is that grace is never something you or I earn. It is actually never something we

deserve. Grace is always a free and undeserved gift from God. It is given to us not because we are good people, righteous people, honorable people, but because we are loved people.

For those of us who know shame for our past or present, who regret parts of our lives, who wrestle with dark tendencies, the meaning of grace is profound. Think about how that idea would change you. Think about being loved no matter what you have done in the past or who you are in the present. Think about being forgiven. God's grace frees us from being prisoners to the past or the present. It offers us hope for the future and for a new life. God says to the Hebrew people in our Isaiah reading today: "I am about to do a new thing . . . I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." Imagine God making a way through your wilderness, making a new thing spring forth in your life. Grace does this. It unlocks our prison doors and offers us hope. We are loved and we are forgiven. And a way has been made through the wilderness.

The issue I think that a lot of us decent, middle class, upstanding citizens have with grace, however, is that sometimes the depth of its meaning in our lives is lost on us. And that is because sometimes we don't recognize our need for grace. We can't quite see ourselves as sinners. Well, we might acknowledge that we are sinners but our blemishes are rather small when compared to others. Maybe we called in sick one day in order to play golf. Or maybe when we were asked to help with a church event we lied said we were busy. Maybe we are kind of grouchy some days. We have sins, but they are not terribly bad. And that is because we see ourselves as basically good people who live good and decent lives.

The Apostle Paul would call that thinking BS. Such thinking reveals that we are still clinging to our personal resumes of good deeds and personal achievements. God's grace is

regarded as the cherry that sits on top of the ice cream sundae we have created for ourselves. It's a nice bonus, but not essential to the good lives we have managed to create for ourselves.

But Paul understands human nature. He understands that the attitudes, the thoughts, the actions, the inclinations, of every single one of us are in need of healing and are in need of resurrection. We need God to make a way in the wilderness that exists within us as individuals and within us as communities. We need God's grace.

Paul came to understand that God's grace is a reality that changes everything about how we live and how we interact in our world. You see, when we write our own resumes, we begin to think that our resume is better than other people's resumes. We do this even unconsciously. We may think that our resumes are better because of our education, or because of our income, or because of our status within the community or within our church, or because of our skin color, or our nationality. When we write our own resumes, we begin to think that our resume is better than other people's resumes.

But when God' writes our resume, it begins with grace. And grace changes everything about how we interact with others. Grace puts us on equal footing with one another. Grace moves us from positions of superiority to a place of mutuality. Instead of having pity for those less fortunate, pity being an emotion from a place of superiority, instead of pity, grace shifts us to compassion, which literally means "to suffer with." Instead of judgment toward others, grace humbles us to an awareness of our own brokenness and need of God's forgiveness.

Interestingly enough, once Paul understood that God's grace stood as the first and most important fact at the top of his resume, his zeal for personal achievement shifted in a new direction. He became zealous to know and live in the risen life found through Christ. Paul talks about pressing on to know the resurrection, not just as something that would happen to him when

he died but as something he could experience while he was living, that he could know and live in God's love and forgiveness each and every day, and could let that knowledge shape everything about his life. Resurrection, a way through the wilderness, is possible. If you and I want our lives to count, to have meaning, we will write an altogether different kind of resume with our lives--one that begins and ends with grace.