

- *Philippians 1:1-11 were read in the service*
- *This was also the service when Amanda spoke about her first stint back in Nepal*

Introduction

- Brink of a new session - with what hope do we embark into the year?
- with what confidence... with what expectation of God at work?
- Zoom in on just a verse or two from early in Paul's letter to the Philippians:
- (4) *In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy* (5) *because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,* (6) *being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Whodunnit?

- The "Whodunnit" is a staple of TV drama:
- through the course of the programme have the thrill of trying to figure out who did the dastardly deed
- recent Taggart - climax was one of the cops in the murder squad standing in for a prostitute who was the target of the murderer - saw the lights of his motorbike, saw his feet, heard the sound of him approaching - but it wasn't until he was about to grab her (and she turned round) - that the camera went to his face and your suspicions were confirmed...
- You spend the programme assessing people's character's, motives, opportunities to commit the crimes...
- whodunnit?
- Here the very opposite is true!
- We know exactly who is at work - and that changes everything!
- what Paul is talking about is God's work in the Philippian Christians
- he is writing to them to encourage them, to thank God for them
- that's where our passage this morning took up the story - see vs.3-5:
- frequently repeated thanks; joy filled prayers; partnership
- Where does this "good vibe" come from?
- it comes from Paul's knowledge, first of all, of who is at work in the Philippians:
GOD
- and so he has **confidence**, utter, absolute, undefeatable confidence in what is happening amongst the Philippians
- is anyone going to be able to thwart God?
- reminiscent of Job's final encounter with God; Job has been beset by troubles, and by (not very comforting) comforters...
- finally God comes to him, overwhelmingly, and parades before Job the greatness of creation... Can Job match God's work?
- Job is forced to confess:
- *"I know that you can do all things; no plan of yours can be thwarted."* (Job 42:2)
- **Whodunnit?** (or who is doing it?): **God!**
- **and he can't and won't be thwarted**

What's he up to?

- Ocean's 11 and 12 or "The Thomas Crown Affair" - films you have to see multiple times to understand what is happening
- the significance of each piece of the jigsaw can sometimes only be apparent once you know where the story is going...
- Or similarly in many novels - like the latest Harry Potter:
- if you're into the books, you'll have been poring over the latest book wondering at the significance of all the details - which ones will prove clues to what will happen in the final book?!

- Here again there is a contrast:
 - we know what God is up to!
 - gospel - change through Christ, on-going transformation, forming Christ within us
- Some of us have a very static view of God - he never changes
 - and that spills over into thinking we never change - we come to faith and that's it
 - I confess I'm very guilty of this...

NO!

- God is a God of change (not a God who changes)
 - he's already changed us from condemned to pardoned
 - he's already transformed us from outsiders to members of his family
- And he continues to change us...
 - *grace and peace to you...* (v.2)
 - ie the character of Christ to grow within us
 - call to be partners in that
 - and partners in spreading the gospel message to others
 - to look for, to work for, to pray for, to speak for change in others
 - (again I think this is something I really struggle to see...)
- What's he up to?
 - he's doing **gospel change**...
 - changing us to be more like Jesus... what's he doing in your life just now?
 - drawing others to himself that they too may be changed, from dead to alive... who around you is he drawing to himself?

When will we be there?

- "When will we be there?" - familiar phrase to any family driving on holiday!
 - our kids have taken to saying it as a joke... we'll get to the roundabouts on the Kingsway on our way between the house and church and they'll say **when will we be there?** - knowing full well the answer is in about 1 minute!!!
- Here the passage more nearly matches our illustration!
 - well, we know when - but we don't know **when!**
 - in the day of Christ Jesus...
 - when he returns in power and glory to bring all things finally and completely under his rule
 - when all people everywhere will be forced to acknowledge him as Lord
 - when we who believe and have been saved will come home to be with our Lord
 - then will the work of grace and peace, the work of forming Christ within us, be completed!
- Certainty - a day that is coming!
 - some of us might wake to that day through the gates of death...
 - some of us might wake to that day as Christ returns in glory, tear the heavens asunder!
- But that day **will come**
 - we will be made like Christ... all those sins we can shake off, all those troubles we bear, all those frustrations and pains - gone!
- **When will we be there?**
 - soon, in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye - when we go home!

Application

- **Confidence**
- Partners in **gospel change** - change in us, change in others
- **Hope**
- Applied to our life as a congregation as well as as individuals