



## Sermon-based Guide for Reflection and Discussion Week of February 6

Scripture: **Philippians 3:4-11**

Sermon Title: *When Loss Becomes Gain*

Paul is preaching here. It starts with his “testimony.” It’s a different testimony than we usually hear. It’s not about his conversion from paganism or depravity; it’s about his conversion from legalism, spiritual pride, and tribal identity. In Jesus’s parable of the prodigal son, Paul is not the younger brother, he’s the older brother. For many of us, whose spiritual bona fides look like Paul’s bona fides (“Baptized as an infant, raised in the church, an evangelical of evangelicals...”) this calls for some serious self-examination. Is our confidence in our own spiritual background, our own tribal identities, or...

Do we count it all as loss, “because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”? Paul is doing some “deconstructing” here. He is sifting through his life and discarding anything that is not Christ: “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.” Nothing else matters to Paul, but on the foundation of Jesus he will build his life and his ministry.

This is so true for Paul, that he recognizes that the logical outcome of a life built on Christ is a life of suffering. If we know Christ, then we know his suffering. If we have entered into a life with Christ, then we enter into a life that is given for others, which is inherently putting others over oneself.

As we read this letter from Paul to his fellow Christ-followers in Philippi, we see that there is a peculiar joy in this – suffering for others in the name and cause of Christ moves us toward a resurrected life, both the ultimate resurrection that happens when Jesus comes again, but also the freed resurrection life that happens now as our losses become our gains.

### Questions:

1. Start by reading together Philippians 3:2-6. What is Paul getting at here? Who are these dogs, these evil workers? These “mutilators of the flesh”?  
(You may need to look at a commentary or the footnotes of your bibles to help answer.)
2. Paul goes from this message of being wary of others to his own “testimony,” where he gives his credentials for having “confidence in the flesh.” What is the difference between Paul’s testimony of coming to faith in Christ and yours? What similarities are there?
3. Paul then eloquently speaks of his gain through loss, of his willingness to suffer: “if somehow I may attain the resurrection of the dead.” Give an example from your own life where suffering and loss have led to unity with Christ and ministry to others?