

6.19.22

Having the Mind of Christ

Philippians 2:1-11

Pastor Douglas Scalise, Brewster Baptist Church

When I was a young boy I grew up on four kinds of stories: Bible stories, baseball stories, Dr. Seuss, and Disney stories. One of the best-known Disney stories then was *Cinderella*. We had the album - for you youngsters, that is a flat black circle with a small hole in the center that you play on a machine called a record player. Having two older sisters, I identified with the heroine. Anyway, we used to listen to the album and knew all the songs, I particularly liked the one with the mice singing, "*We can do it, we can do it, we can help our Cinderelli, we can make her dress so pretty, there's nothing to it really.*" It's amazing how words from your childhood stay in your head isn't it? You know how Cinderella turns out, she goes from being the servant who is treated harshly and unfairly and not as she deserves, and she ends up happy, well-dressed and with a worthy prince. That kind of upwardly mobile, everything works out great in the end story is one we all like and know. Interestingly, the story of Jesus is the opposite. He's the worthy **prince** who gives up everything **to be a servant** who at the end of his life is treated harshly and unfairly and not as he deserves. However, the servant is ultimately vindicated by God. Listen to **Philippians 2:1-11**, "If then there is

any encouragement in Christ,

any consolation from love,

any sharing in the Spirit,

any compassion and sympathy,

make my joy complete;

be of the same mind, having the **same love, being in full accord and**

of one mind. Do nothing from **selfish ambition** or **conceit**,

but **in humility** regard others as better than yourselves.

Let each of you **look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.**

⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, though he was in **the form of God**,

did not regard **equality with God** as something to be exploited,

⁷ but **emptied himself**, taking the form of a slave,

being born in human likeness. And being found in human form,

⁸ **he humbled himself**

and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him

the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹ and every tongue should confess **that Jesus Christ is Lord**, to the glory of God the Father.”

Three times Paul stresses that followers of Jesus should be of the **same mind or one mind**. This doesn’t mean we agree on every single thing, but that we have the same mindset, the same attitude, the same approach to life and that is the mindset, attitude, and approach that was in Christ Jesus. Fifty years ago in 1972, one of the best-known slogans in public-service advertising was introduced by what was known at the time as the United Negro College Fund. The slogan was, *“A mind is a terrible thing to waste.”* That phrase has had real staying power. The UNCF used it for forty years and then tweaked it to, *“A mind is a terrible thing to waste but a wonderful thing to invest in.”* Your mind is vitally important, and you don’t want to waste or pollute it or fill it with things that may corrupt it. You want to invest in a Christlike mindset.

Many scriptures remind you about the importance of what you think about and where you set our mind. **Psalms 26:2** encourages you to engage in intelligent self-reflection, *“Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and **mind**.”*

Proverbs 15:14 reminds you of the importance of learning. *“The **mind** of one who has understanding seeks knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on folly.”*

Isaiah 26:3 shares a beautiful promise about peace of mind. *“Those of **steadfast mind** you keep in peace – in peace because they trust in you.”* In

Jeremiah 17:10, God warns, *“I the Lord test the **mind and search the heart**, to give to all according to their ways, according to the fruit of their doings.”*

Your mind involves at least four major areas: ideas, images, information, and your ability to think. In a sense, the greatest battlefield in the world is located between your ears and the stakes are incredibly high. When Jesus was tested by

Satan in the wilderness, Jesus was able to be victorious because he had thought about and learned the scriptures so much that he could think straight and not be deceived. Pondering and memorizing scripture is important so you can think properly and have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. You can't have the same mind as Christ if you don't know he is, what he taught, what he did, and what he sacrificed.

In Philippians 2, Jesus is presented as humble, loving, obedient, and self-sacrificing. This is the mind you're to have as a follower of Christ. **The necessity of believers being of one mind, or the same mind is so important to Paul that he mentions it in every chapter of Philippians.** In 1:27, *"Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with **one mind** for the faith of the gospel."*

Then **three times in 2:2 and 5**, *"be of **the same mind, of one mind, let the same mind** be in you that was in Christ Jesus."*

In 3:15, *"Let those of us then who are mature be of **the same mind**."*

Finally in 4:2 Paul urges two women who had been disagreeing over some issue *"to be of the same mind."*

Paul describes the opposite of the mind of Christ in Philippians 2:4 - selfish ambition or conceit, regarding ourselves as better than others, looking only to our own interests and disregarding the interests or needs of others, and arrogantly looking down on other people. Paul has reason to believe the struggles among the Philippians are because this kind of thinking is shaping behavior – people insisting on getting their own way and not being like-minded is leading to discord. Often when you're in conflict with someone else, if you check Philippians 2, it's because you're looking to your own interests and not the interests of others. These issues continue to plague human relationships both inside and outside the church, but they don't need to have the final word; we can change our mind about what is happening.

Transforming your mind toward the mind of Christ **comes through making key passages of scriptures permanent fixtures of your thought life.**

When we continually read and reflect on and take into our minds passages like Philippians 2:1-11, Colossians 3:1-17, or 1 First Corinthians 13 they truly begin to change your life. God has made our mind and it is entirely possible for any of us to do this – all of us have learned huge amounts of information.

Transforming our mind comes from the images we watch and listen to as well. The media bombards us with many images that aren't helpful or positive. Historically many churches and cathedrals have used icons, stained glass windows, carvings, statues, and the architecture itself to provide images that are intended to direct our thoughts and lead the worshiper into the presence of God. We saw this in every church we visited in Greece this spring. More recently churches have used screens, photos, and video clips for the same purposes. What we look at or listen to shapes us all the time. Just think of the power of music to shape your mood and you know how true this is. Many scholars believe that Philippians 2:5-11 is part of an early Christian hymn that Paul is quoting and recalling to the church in his letter.

What you think about, what you read, watch, and listen to shapes your mind and who you are and who you become. If God is only an occasional presence in your mind, you shouldn't be surprised that your thoughts, feelings, behavior, and relationships reflect that fact. The more God occupies your thoughts, the more preoccupied you become with the mind of Christ, the more the Spirit of the Lord will shape your thoughts, feelings, will, behavior, and relationships.

Yesterday, I had the joy of joining Judy Turpin's granddaughter Katy Kraeutler and Andrew Nixon in marriage. It's a privilege to stand close to a couple during their wedding ceremony because you can see in their eyes how much they're in love with each other. When you're in love, you think about the other person a lot. If you love God, you'll think about God a lot. If you scarcely ever think of God during your day and during the week, it's kind of hard to say you truly love God.

As you think about what having the mind of Christ means for you, remember; we learn in Philippians 2 that Jesus gave up all claim to title, rights,

privilege, recognition, and personal glory, and sought simply to be obedient to God without fanfare, without applause, appreciation, acknowledgement, without promise of reward. He did that for you, for me, for all the people of the world.

Paul says, this act of humility is the central defining act of the Christian faith, and it's the attitude, the approach that all Christ followers are to take.

God and Jesus have done something for you that you could never do. What they're looking for now is what you'll do in return. Gallup reported on Friday that the percentage of American adults who believe in God was down to 81%, the lowest number since they started tracking that data. It doesn't matter to me how many people say they believe in God. Even Satan and demons believe in God. The real question is **will you seek to obey and follow God and to live a life that gives glory and pleasure to the Lord?** Oswald Chambers wrote in *My Utmost for His Highest* (May 10), *"We have to do something. We are in danger of forgetting that we cannot do what God does, and that God will not do what we can do. We cannot save or sanctify ourselves – God does that. But God will not give us good habits or character, and he will not force us to walk correctly before him. We have to do all that ourselves."*

Joe was a drunk who was miraculously converted at a Bowery mission. Prior to his conversion, he had gained the reputation of being a drunk for whom there was no hope, only a miserable existence in the gutter. But following his conversion to a new life with the Lord, everything changed. Joe became the most caring person anyone associated with the mission had ever known. Joe spent his days and nights hanging out at the mission, doing whatever needed to be done. There was never anything that he was asked to do that he considered beneath him. Whether it was cleaning up the mess left by some violently ill client or scrubbing toilets in the men's room, Joe did what was asked with a smile on his face and gratitude for the chance to help. He could be counted on to feed feeble men who wandered off the street into the mission, and to undress and tuck into bed men who were too out of it to take care of themselves.

One evening, when the director of the mission was delivering his evening evangelistic message to the usual crowd of still and sullen men with drooped

heads, there was one man who looked up, came down the aisle to the altar, and knelt to pray, crying out for God to help him to change for good. The repentant man kept shouting, *“Oh God! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe!”* The director of the mission leaned over and said to the man, *“Son, I think it would be better if you prayed, ‘Make me like Jesus.’”* The man looked up at the director with a quizzical expression on his face and asked, *“Is he like Joe.”*¹

What a tremendous credit to Joe’s faith in Jesus. Many people don’t have a clue about Christ, but they know your mind, habits and your character and they can tell whether you’re truly engaged in following Jesus. *“No one is born either naturally or supernaturally with character it must be developed. Nor are we born with habits – we have to form godly habits on the basis of the new life God has placed within us. If the majesty, grace, and power of God are not being exhibited in us, God holds us responsible (May 16, June 15).”*²

Like with the end of Cinderella, Paul says there’s going to be a change at the end of history that’s unmistakable and clear for everyone to see. Jesus the servant will be shown to be Jesus the Lord. Paul says the day is going to come when, *“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.”*

If you confess Jesus as Lord, you’ll need to change some of your habits if you want to experience and demonstrate the mind, life, and power of Christ. As you seek to live with the humble, obedient, self-sacrificing mind of Christ, God’s Spirit and power will be increasingly evident in your life and you’ll imitate Christ’s humble, obedient, service. May we be of one mind, the mind of Christ.

Blessing

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,” Philippians 2:5

¹ Alice Gray, *More Stories for the Heart*, Multnomah Books, Sisters, OR, 1996, 28.

² Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*.

Questions for Discussion or Reflection

1. How intentional and careful are you about what you allow into your mind through what you read, listen to, and watch? Why does it matter?
2. Why does Paul want the members of the church in Philippi to be of one mind or the same mind?
3. How would you describe what it means to have the mind of Christ?
4. What does Paul say that Jesus has given up and done for you and for everyone?
5. Dallas Willard believed, *“The transformation of our thought life by taking on the mind of Christ – his ideas, images, information, and patterns of thinking – opens the way to deliverance of every dimension of the human self.”* Do you think this is true? What would be required of you for you to live this way? What difference could it make?
6. As you seek to live more and more with the humble, obedient, self-sacrificing mind of Christ, what changes might that require of you in your day to day living and interactions with others?