

## Having the Mind of Christ

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Philippians 2:1-11

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A month ago, I went to the memorial of a high school friend of my husband. In school, Wendell was a year behind his twin brother Larry because of health issues that he struggled with his whole life. Because of that, instead of playing sports like his twin, he was the manager of the teams, always sitting on the sidelines, always the support for the team, but never a player. At least 10 people who knew Wendell since elementary school years came to his memorial, one of them being my husband, Scott. After the service, they gathered and reminisced about Wendell. He never married, never had children. But, he spent his life serving others- he was a co-founder of a non-profit relief organization, Rescue Task Force which is one of the first organizations to respond whenever there is a major disaster anywhere in the world. Because of how he spent his life, even though he never played a high school sport, there is a community college football stadium named after him. Over 1000 people attended his memorial because he put others first.

The official at his memorial told the story about Salvation Army's founder, William Booth. In the early 1900's when the telegraph was just invented Booth sent a one word message by telegram to encourage his officers around the world. That word was "Others!" That word, "Others" became a motto for the Salvation Army. And that word, "Others," was the motto for Wendell. How did he do it? **Let us pray.**

There is so much theology in these 11 verses, that a whole weekend retreat could be centered around them. So how to put it into a 20 minute sermon? If you don't remember anything this morning, **I want you to go away with an answer to one question. That question is, "If we are to have the same mind that was in Jesus, what is that attitude that Paul is talking about?"**

Before we actually get into the verses, we need to remember that Paul is writing this from prison in Rome, with no clue what the future holds for him. He was able to find true peace of mind no matter what his circumstances were. Paul spoke of inner joy and inner happiness sixteen times in the four brief chapters of this letter. Philippians is considered to be Paul's joy letter. Some even use say that it is "Paul's hymn of joy." Paul's mind was filled with peace and he rejoiced in preaching of the gospel even though he was

imprisoned and facing the prospect of imminent execution for his stand for Jesus Christ.

So, what was his secret? What was Wendell's secret? Paul had the same mind that was in Christ. From the original Greek manuscript, there is not a word for 'mind' in v. 5. If translating this verse strictly from the Greek, v. 5 would say, "This think ye among you which also was in Christ Jesus. Paul was thinking what Jesus was thinking. So what was Jesus thinking? What was his attitude?"

I have read somewhere that the human mind cannot think of two things at once. You cannot be thinking about the pain in your back in the same moment that you are thinking about let's say, what you want to eat, like, Golden Spoon Yogurt (our current favorite food). Similarly, you cannot be thinking about your problems in the same moment that you are thinking as Jesus was thinking. You cannot be thinking of your own wants and desires while thinking of the needs of others. Having the attitude of Jesus, thinking as Jesus thought is the secret of real Christian living. It is the secret of true happiness.

**In the opening verses of Philippians 2**, Paul says there are four solid reasons for Christian unity: because there is "encouragement," because there is a "comfort from his love," because there is a "fellowship with the Spirit," and because there is an experience of the "tenderness and compassion" of God. All four things are wonderful, heart warming, and desirable. Because of these four things, you and I are to be "like minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose." It is because we are members of God's family and have learned from him, that we must live in *peace and unity* with one another. This is what Paul desired for the church at Philippi. This is what God desires for us.

But, let's be honest with one another. One of the most obvious defects to mar the church's reputation was and still is its disunity. That is what was going on in Philippi- there were differences of opinion and internal disturbances. And these differences will only injure one another. Most importantly, disunity in the church injures and often times destroy our witness to the world. After all, who gives Christianity a bad rap, not the non-Christians, but the Christians? We do it to ourselves.

So what are we to do? Have the mind of Christ, think like Jesus, have his attitude. Paul says in v. 3 “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. There’s that word again, “Others.”

**Eugene Peterson, from The Message, puts verses 1-4 this way** “If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care- then do me a favor. Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don’t push your way to the front; don’t sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don’t be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.” Others.

**This is the mind of Christ, This is the attitude of Christ.**

**This is the heart of Christian conduct.** Jesus gave himself for others.

Followers of Christ are also to give themselves for others.

Looking at Philippians 2:6-8 We are to think of ourselves the way Jesus Christ thought of himself. Jesus had equal status with God, but chose to make himself as a man to the point of death. Jesus being fully God, chose to be fully man. He set aside the privileges of His Divinity and took on the very nature of a servant. This is heavy theology, but this is the center of Christianity. Jesus was fully God and fully human. **Jesus was a man in nature, in circumstances and experience, and particularly in his relation to God the Father. But at the same time he was genuinely divine.**

Genuinely divine and genuinely human.

**Phil 2:7-8** is not saying that Jesus is a creature of the creation; nor is it saying that Jesus gave up any of His divine qualities. Instead it is saying that Jesus who is God took on the *form of a man*. It is not saying that the Son of God set aside any of his divine qualities or attributes. It is saying the Jesus, son of Man, gave up the status and privilege that were His in heaven. From 2 Cor. 8:9, Paul puts this concept another way, “though He were rich, yet for your sake became poor,” once again speaking of the privilege and honor that He deserved but temporarily gave up for our sake. Jesus, Son of God, and Son of Man. Because of this truth, the author of the letter to the Hebrews wrote, in chapter 4:15, “we do not have a high priest (referring to Jesus) who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are- yet was without sin.”

Jesus knowing he was God, was able to humble himself and take on a lowly position as a human. He humbled himself not only to become human, but to be obedient to death, even death on a cross. This is humility at its best. This is the mind of Jesus. This is what brought peace and joy to Paul in the worst of situations. This was the message that William Booth wanted to give to his officers in the telegram “others” and this is what Wendell lived by.

This is the secret of many of you sitting here in this church today live by. Jesus said that his followers would feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the prisoner, make welcome the one who is lonely. And he added, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for me. (Matt 25: 31-46) We have many here in this church who have the mind of Christ, who are examples of what Henri Nouwen, one of the amazing saints in this world, called “servant leaders.” Henri wrote, “The way of the Christian leader is not the way of upward mobility in which our world has invested so much, but the way of downward mobility ending on the cross. The downward-moving way of Jesus is the way to the joy and the peace of God, a joy and peace that is not of this world.

If I asked you to raise your hand if you are a caregiver either professionally or voluntarily, my guess very few of you would raise your hands. But my guess is that many of you like Christ, are servants in some form to “even the least of these.” I watch the **Ushers** help those of you with walkers get comfortably seated each week here in the church service. I watch the director of music either **Al Brightbill or Eileen O’Hern**, step down for leading the choir to turning the pages of music for Lynette while she is playing the postlude.

Servant leadership makes me think of **Pat Gardner**, who heads of the flower ministry here- often times she is taking the sanctuary flowers, dividing them up while planning on who to take them to. Who needs them most this week. Who needs to be blessed and comforted by them.

I think of **Barb Lorenzen**, who has faithfully covered the children ministry while we are looking for a permanent paid children’s director. Of course she is not doing this alone, for there is a whole team of servants covering the needs of the children; think of the slide show last week about V.B.S. Yesterday was Service Saturday under the leadership of **Pam Allison**, who has a heart for the needs in Orange County. About 30 servants of all ages gathered to work the Presbyterian Church in Orange. Then there is the

servant leader, **Terry Cocking** and the growing prison ministry. And all the people doing some sort of visitation to the hospitals, home bounds, and caring facilities, and the quiet people who are committed to pray daily for the concerns of this church; the list of servants in this church goes on and one.

**Let us continue be a church that Paul describes in V. 15 of this same chapter 2, “Blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.” This can only happen if we take on the mind of Christ, knowing we are loved by our heavenly creator God and become his servants, looking not only at our own interests, but also to the interests of others.**

What is the answer to the question that I started with- What is the mind of Christ that Paul is talking about. “others.”

And becoming a servant.

To end this sermon, after Lynette has played it through once, let us join together and sing the chorus of *Make me a Servant* as a prayer.