

Have the Same Mindset as Christ

Philippians 2:1-11 (NIV)

¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

“Be the change.” Although some attribute this quote to Gandhi, we don’t know exactly who first said this phrase, but we see it on bumper stickers and as hashtags. The idea is that if you want the world to change or a system to change, if you see injustice or inequality, don’t just point at other people but start with changing yourself and what you do in order to change things for the better. It starts with us as individuals, but it cannot end there.

We as Christians are called the “body of Christ.” As such, we are moving, breathing, active, and in motion - not static or staying the same. Living our faith is always in motion one way or another - always doing, always growing, always learning, always living. If not, we are regressing.

The Apostle Paul knew this too. This is why he encourages the Christians in Philippi to be continually working on their relationships with another. As he does so, he starts with what they all have: “If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion...” (verse 1) This isn’t really an “if” statement. If they are Christians, they have these. They have been united with Christ. Christ brought these people together in what he did for them – living perfectly for them in their place and dying on the cross to take away all their sins. Being united in Christ, they have the comfort of knowing that their eternal life with God is secured by what Christ did for them. This gift of faith in Christ is given by the one Holy Spirit, the one who brought them all together in the same faith through the hearing of the message of Christ, through the gift of Holy Baptism. They have been softened by the love of Christ and are not cynical to the sin-filled world that we live in. They have tenderness and compassion from what they know Christ did for them. All Christians share in these things.

So Paul challenges them to grow in the expression of their faith, and not regress. “Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” (verses 2-5)

What is the oneness, this one mindedness that Paul is talking about? It’s the mindset of Christ Jesus. Well, what’s that? Christ is God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, of all humans. We should serve him at his whim, but instead he humbled himself to serve us. He gave up a life free of pain and suffering in order to take in pain and suffering – and not for himself, but for us. He did not use his divine (God) nature for his own advantage to make his life easier, to wish away hunger, to block all the pain receptors, make his enemies mute or blow them into oblivion. No, he experienced all of it in full for us. He became a servant for us, a servant so low as to wash his disciples’ dirty, disgusting feet. He did not consider himself better or superior, but he considered himself nothing. For people he should never have served, he served them, becoming obedient to the law that he gave us and obedient to death – even death on a cross!

Imagine the change in our world if we all changed our mindset so that it was the same as Christ Jesus’, if all of us in humility valued others above ourselves, not looking to our own interests but to the interest of others. Marriage counselors would be out of business because spouses would always be putting their husband’s or wife’s needs ahead of their own. There would be no need for any parenting books because parents and children would be looking out of the interests of those in their care or those caring for them. There would be no underhanded deals or trades because people would think of the other person first and serve them instead of themselves. Riots and protests would cease because everyone in every community would be serving one another. In fact, if we all had the same mindset as Christ, would there even be any crimes?

Even though this is what we are to strive for, maybe the whole world having the mindset of Christ is too ambitious of a change right this minute. How about if we all had that same mindset of Christ just here in this congregation? If we did, I'm not sure anyone would ever leave the church building because you all would be stumbling over each other to see what your brother or sister in Christ needed. Hurt feelings would be quickly rectified. Divisions would be overcome. Disagreements would end genially with all involved feeling as if they were listened to and conscientiously considered.

Sadly, our congregation, our people, us, as much as we love each other and appreciate each other, we are not the utopia of all having the same mindset as Christ. It's not always in our marriages or in our homes. It's not even what we see in ourselves. We are selfish. We have our flashes of good, days when we put other people and their needs ahead of our own. We have days when we willingly and purposefully act as servants of others, days where we wash dishes for someone else instead of washing feet, days where we turn off the TV and engage in conversation with our family to know their needs and attend to them. But how many more times do we stop doing these things because we are worn out, because there is something that we want to do instead? How many times do I see myself as having the best and most correct ideas and so I disregard the ideas of others? Or, when someone makes a decision that affects me, that I grumble and complain and let out an annoyed huff because I would have made a better decision, a smarter decision, that if they just would have let me make the decisions, the world would be a better place? I value myself over others so many times.

Because we often do things out of selfish ambition and value others above ourselves, we have to come back to see Christ's mindset in his relationship with us. He did not use his divine (God) nature to help him through life, to give him an advantage, but he used it to serve us instead by being completely selfless in our place. He did nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. He valued us over his livelihood. He looked to our interests instead of his own. He lived for us and became obedient to death on a cross to serve us, not himself. He didn't have an ego to stroke and figured this is the way to get people to worship him. No, he put aside his equality with God to make us perfect so that we can be with God. He clothed us with every right thing he did, every selfless thing he ever did.

In Christ, we are forgiven and made new with the same mindset as Christ Jesus. So, be that change. Live this same mindedness of Christ that you have, his mindset as a humble servant who does nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Value others above yourself, looking to the interests of others. Start with you as your brothers and sisters in Christ around you. Seek each other out. See what's going on with each other here at our church. Think about how I can serve them. We might even ask, "How can I serve you today?" Do this at home with your spouse, your kids, your parents. Ask how to serve your friends, your coworkers, your boss, your teacher.

Having the same mindset as Christ, be the change and so start to affect our world. Live Christ's mindset, like the Philippian Christians, here among our brothers and sisters in Christ because we are united in Christ, comforted by his love lived for us, and his humble service to us which took away our sins and clothed us with his perfection. Amen.