

Let the mind of Christ be in you

By Vicar Jake Zabel

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, Amen.

Sermon text Philippians 2:4-8

V4-8

⁴Consider not the things of yourselves but the things of others. ⁵Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. ⁶Who, subsisting in the form of God, did not consider equality with God to be spoils of robbery [a stolen treasure, something that is coveted or desired]. ⁷But emptied Himself, taking on the form of as servant, having been made in the likeness of man. ⁸And having been found in the appearance of man, he humbled becoming obedient unto death, even death on a cross.

Lord sanctify us by your truth, your Word is truth. Amen.

What would Jesus do? We've all heard this saying before. Generally this statement is to make us stop and think, and try to approach a situation in a Christ-like manner. Basically, the statement is saying, be like Jesus. This message appears throughout the New Testament. Paul tells in 1 Corinthians (11:10) to imitate him, just as he imitates Christ, and again in 1 Thessalonians (1:6) he calls us to imitate the pastors who imitate the LORD. 1 Peter (2:21) calls us to follow Christ's example, 1 John (2:6) tells us to walk as He walked, even Jesus Himself says that we should do as He has done for us (John 13:15). And in today's reading Paul tells us to have the mind of Christ.

Paul tells us "consider not the things of yourselves but the things of others", in others word, "don't be selfish". Paul is telling us to think not of ourselves but to think about others, forget about your own wants and desires and instead think about your neighbour, forget about your own needs and instead focus on the needs of your neighbour. Put others first and yourself last.

Pastor Michael Lockwood in his book *The Unholy Trinity* says that the self in the greatest idol (pg 122). The idolatry of Me, Myself and I is the root of idolatry. The root of every sin boils down to the idea of "Me First". The sin of Adam and Eve was that they put themselves above God, they did not desire what God wanted, but what they wanted, "to be like God" (Genesis 3:5). Our

old sinful nature is the desire to put ourselves first; to have the universe revolve around us. Every sin flows out of this self-seeking, self-pleasing nature. We sin because we want to put ourselves first. We covet what we want, we lie and kill to benefit ourselves, we steal to please our material pleasure and we commit a range of sexual sins to feed our own selfish desires for pleasure. We twist God's Word and take His Name in vain to suit our own benefits. All sins flow out of "Me First". Any parent will tell you that you need to teach children to share but you never have to teach a child to be selfish. We are born thinking only of ourselves. This is what Original Sin is, the selfish desire to put me first. Two year olds scream "mine, mine. I want it." As we grow older this selfish nature is not lost but strengthened. For, each of us has a deep-seated nature that cries out, "ME!"

We can see this everywhere in our society, I-Phone, My-Space, selfies. Our society is self-focused. It's all about my opinion, my belief, my truth. Everyone is putting themselves first; not just us above their neighbour but above God.

Everywhere people are putting themselves first and God last, they'd rather go to a sporting event than Church on Sunday, they'd rather be involved in some sort of club or business instead of helping out at Church, they'd rather listen to their own ideas than the Word of God.

Every one of us is a fallen sinful selfish human being, who continually puts ourselves first.

Jesus tells us that all of the Law and the Prophets rests upon two commandments "Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength" and "love your neighbour as yourself." (Leviticus 19:18, Deuteronomy 6:5, Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:30-31, Luke 10:27) The entirety of the Law rests on this "love God and love your neighbour." The Bible teaches us that we should put God first, others second and ourselves last. But instead we tend to go "me first, other second, God last."

What would Jesus do? Would He put Himself first?

Paul tells us in Ephesians (5:1-2) to imitate God and to walk in love just as Christ loved us and gave Himself for us as an offering and sacrifice to God. Further on Paul calls husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the Church, and gave us Himself for Her (Ephesians 5:25). Scripture tells us time and time

again to love one another as Christ loved us (John 13:34, 15:12, 1 John 3:23, 4:21).

Paul tells us “Consider not the things of yourselves but the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Jesus never put Himself first.

He, who was with equal to God, who was with God and was God (John 1:1), did not consider His divinity something to be desired or coveted. Instead, He emptied Himself of His divinity and took on human flesh (John 1:14). For our sake, the divine became human, the infinite became finite, the immortal became mortal, the exalted humbled Himself, the first became last. For our sake, He who was rich, gave up His Heavenly treasures and became poor for our sake, so that through His poverty will would become rich, so that the treasures of Heaven would be opened to us (2 Corinthians 8:9). For our sake God sent His own Son in the likeness of man. On account of our sins, Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh, so that the righteous requirement of the Law would be fulfilled (Romans 8:3-4).

Because of our sinfulness, Christ became sin for us, so that we could become righteous (2 Corinthians 5:20). Because we are unable to keep the Law, Jesus kept it on our behalf. Because we fail to love God, Jesus humbled Himself and came to do the will of the Father (Luke 22:42, John 4:34, 6:38). Because we fail to love our neighbour, Jesus loved us and gave Himself up for us as a sacrifice to God (Ephesians 5:2). Because we are greedy, Jesus became poor, so that we may become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). Because we are disobedient and selfish, Jesus became selfless and obedient unto death, even death on the Cross.

Jesus did not consider the things of Himself; He did not desire His own divinity, power or might. Instead He considered us and our need for a Saviour. And so He emptied Himself and became human, weak and helpless. He humbled Himself and allowed Himself to be mocked, beaten, spat on, whipped and crucified. This is the Gospel, that while we were still enemies of God, Christ died for us, reconciling us unto the Father. (Romans 5:10) As the Formula of Concord says (Solid Declaration III.9), “ We are justified on the basis of sheer grace, because of the sole merit, the entire obedience, and the bitter suffering, death and the resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness.”

Our salvation rests not on our own merits. For, if it did, no one could be saved. For, none of us are righteous (Romans 3:10-11), none of us loves their neighbour as ourself, none of us loves God with our whole heart. We are fallen sinners, who fall daily into sin, selfish beings who continue to put ourselves first. Not one of us can perfectly put God and our neighbours first.

Only one person could and did, and that was Jesus Christ. He humbled Himself and became obedient to God, taking on the form of a servant, fulfilling the will of the Father and perfectly keeping God's Law. He put Himself last, and us sinful humans first. He became despised, poor, and weak. He became the lowest of the low and allowed Himself to die a criminal's death. And even then He never put Himself first, in the Garden of Gethsemane He submitted to God saying, "not My will but Your will be done." And as He died on the Cross, hands and feet pierced through with nails, blood pouring down His face and back, as those around Him mocked Him, He cried out, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) As Jesus was crucified, He continued to put others first, praying on behalf of those who put Him there. It was our sin that nailed Jesus to the cross, as He died He pleaded for our mercy, He prayed for your forgiveness. He did not consider the things of Himself, instead all His thoughts were concerned about you and your salvation.

And having died, He rose again three days later. And having shown Himself to His disciples He ascended on high and was seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty (Acts 7:55-56, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2, 1 Peter 3:22).

Jesus says the first shall be last and the last shall be first (Matthew 20:16), those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted (Matthew 23:12, Luke 14:11). Those who selfishly put themselves first and exalt themselves over others will be brought low, but those who selflessly put themselves last and humble themselves will be raised up (Luke 1:52).

Christ, who humbled Himself and made Himself the last and the lowest of all, was raised up and exalted on high. He was given the Name that is above all names and glorified as LORD of all.

At His return every knee, in Heaven, on Earth and under the Earth shall bow before (Isaiah 45:13, Romans 14:11, Philippians 2:10), and every tongue, in

Heaven, on Earth, under the Earth and in the sea, of every nations, tribes and language will sing His praises (Revelation 5:13, 7:9) and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is LORD (Philippians 2:11).

Every knee in Heaven, on Earth and even in Hell will bow before Jesus, the angels and believers in humble reverent submission, and the demons and unbelievers in forced fearful slavery.

Having died on the Cross, Jesus has returned to His Kingdom (Luke 23:42), where He reigns with ever-lasting power. As we confess in the Nicene Creed, “He ascended into Heaven, sits at the right hand of the Father. He will come again with glory to judge the living and the dead, Whose kingdom will have no end.”

Yet, even now Jesus continued to put us first. For, Christ did not die for His own sake but for our sake. He humbled Himself not for His Own exaltation but for our exaltation. Christ put Himself last in order to put us first.

For all who have been baptised, have been baptised into Christ’s death, and having been united with Him in the likeness of His death, we also share in the likeness of His resurrection (Romans 6:4-5). So that just as He died and rose again, so too even though we die we shall be raised with Him. And having been raised with Him we shall also be glorified with Him. For, all who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ (Galatians 3:27). Christ shared in our humility so that we would share in His exaltation. He shared in our poverty so that we could share in His riches, He shared in our sufferings so that we could share in His blessings, He shared in our humanity so that we could share in His divinity (1 Peter 5:1).

Jesus was obedient and fulfilled the Law perfectly. He did this not for Himself but for us. His obedience is reckoned to us righteousness. The salvation that He earned is given to us as a free gift.

Christ has set us free from the slavery of sin (Romans 6:6,17-18), sin no longer reigns in our body, that we should obey our own selfish desires (Romans 6:12). We now live not by the Law but by grace (Romans 6:14) and can therefore walk freely in newness of life (Romans 6:4).

For Christ loved us, and gave Himself up for us as an offering to God (Ephesians 5:2), therefore, love one another as Christ has loved you (John 13:34, 15:12).

Let the mind that was in Christ be also in you. Amen.

And let the grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who became obedient unto death, even death on the cross, be with you always. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SIXTH SUNDAY IN LENT (PALM SUNDAY)

Heavenly Father, we come into Your presence with thanksgiving and joy. You are a great God. You rule over the whole earth from the deepest seas to the highest hills. We bow down and worship You, for You are our Maker. We are the people You care for, and the flock for which You provide.

We thank and praise You especially that You have sent to us the living Word, Jesus Christ, Your Son. We praise You that He willingly accepted the disgrace of dying on the cross for us. Grant that we may keep our eyes fixed on Him, and may not grow weary in doing good, become discouraged, or murmur when we are chastened and corrected. Uplift us with the assurance that, as we share in Jesus' sufferings, so we shall also share in His resurrection to eternal life.

Save us, then, O Lord, not by any good deeds that we have done, but by Your mercy, through the new birth given in our baptism and the new life created by the Holy Spirit. Rescue us from all sin, and purify us to serve and praise You.

Put Your will into our minds, and write it into our hearts. Put Your song into our spirits, that we may proclaim with joy: "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Give us the power to seek out those who are still strangers to Your salvation. Send workers to preach Your Word in truth, and to proclaim the name of Jesus as the only name under heaven through which people can be saved. Prosper the witness of all Your children throughout the world, that all may know You.

Give to this congregation, and to all who worship here, joy and energy as we serve You. Give us all willing minds and pure hearts that we may do our utmost to build and strengthen Your kingdom.

We pray for all who are burdened by sickness, sorrow, pain, anxiety, and fear of death. Be with them as they pass through troubled waters. Give them the faith that knows that You will deliver them in Your wisdom and love.

Lord, You are able to keep us from falling and to bring us faultless and joyful before Your glorious presence. To You, the only God, our Saviour, through

Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, in all ages past, and now, and for ever and ever! Amen.

PALM SUNDAY

Isaiah 50:4-9a

⁴ “The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, to know how to use a Word to sustain him who is tired out. He awakens Me morning after morning. He awakens My ear to listen, like those who are disciples. ⁵ The Lord GOD has opened My ear, and I Myself have not been rebellious. I have not turned back. ⁶ I have given My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out My beard. I have not hidden My face from insults and spittle. ⁷ The Lord GOD will help Me. That is why I have not been disgraced. That is why I have set My face like flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed. ⁸ He who declares Me righteous is near. Who will contest a lawsuit against Me? Let us stand up together! Who is My accuser? Let him confront Me! ⁹ Look! The Lord GOD will come to help Me. Who is he who will condemn Me?

Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ Have the same attitude as Christ Jesus had! ⁶ Although He was in the form of God, yet He did not consider His equality with God as a prize to exploit. ⁷ Instead, He emptied Himself, took on the form of a slave, and became like other human beings; and when He was found in the appearance of a human being, ⁸ He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. ⁹ That is why God also has very highly exalted Him, and given Him the name that is above every other name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus everyone in heaven and on earth and under the earth may kneel, ¹¹ and that everyone may confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

John 12:12-19

¹² On the next day, the large crowd that had come for the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. ¹³ They took branches of palm-trees, went out to meet Him, and began to shout,

“Hosanna!” “Blessed is He who is coming in the name of the Lord!” and “the King of Israel!”

¹⁴ Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as Scripture has said:

¹⁵ “Stop being afraid, daughter of Zion! Look! Your King is coming, sitting on the colt of a donkey.”

¹⁶ His disciples did not understand these things at first, but, when Jesus had been glorified, they remembered that these things had been written about Him, and that they had done these things to

Him. ¹⁷ Therefore the crowd that had been with Him when He had called Lazarus out of the tomb and had raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. ¹⁸ This was also a reason why the crowd went to meet Him, that they heard that He had per-formed this miraculous sign. ¹⁹ Therefore the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are not achieving anything. Look! The world has gone after Him.”