

## The Mind of Christ

Sunday, December 3, 2023 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Philippians 2:5

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ..

- Introduction

I read recently that the ancients believed that a person could get the "mind of God," that they learn, or somehow gain, the ability to think like God, to look at life from God's perspective, which, according to the Old Testament, is very different from the way we view the world. His ways are "higher than our ways" and what is a high priority on earth is not necessarily a high priority in heaven. Jesus would have this "higher than our way" thinking and perhaps I was wrong to surmise that it could be learned, perhaps the mind of Christ is something given to us when we ask for it in prayer. It probably comes over time and has to do with our maturity, both spiritually and emotionally, but the mind of Christ sees things from an eternal perspective, and is, in its way, striking in that it shows humility and obedience to God as the route to greatness.

- This call to be humble sort of reminds me of the recent football game between Iowa State and Kansas State University. Iowa State was supposed to lose. All the statistics of the game indicated that Iowa State was supposed to lose. There were several explosive plays but the Iowa State offense either didn't or rarely crossed midfield. Yet Iowa State won the game. The mind of Christ, with its call to obedience and humility and service to others ahead of self, hardly looks like a road to greatness, but it is the road to greatness. People who live this way win in life whether it looks like it or not.

- Set the Stage

To set the stage, Paul wrote Philippians, according to tradition, in a moldy, miserable Roman dungeon. People in these places were not guaranteed that they would ever leave. They could be executed, or simply forgotten and left to starve. The chains and manacles had rough edges that would cut and bleed, yet the Epistle of the Philippians is known as the epistle of joy. Its happy tone shines throughout the letter, and I think that tone is a gift of the Holy Spirit, to be joyful in the midst of trial and it is here that we learn about the mind of Christ.

- Main Point

The mind of Christ is more prayed for than learned and it leads to a visionary humility. We strive for it but only with the work of the Holy Spirit does this mindset grow in us. I find it notable that this mindset is organic in that we don't rely on our willpower to live and think this way. It does not come natural too us. It is something that the Holy Spirit grows in us, so while we do our best, the most important takeaway from this is that this is something for which we pray and pray fervently.

- Application

### A Humility that Leads to Victory

This is what the mind of Christ looks like, as outlined in this passage. People with the mind of Christ agree with each other, they find they have the same priorities and conversation leads to consolation, comfort, affection, and mercy. Have you ever met someone who seems to be encouraging just out of habit? People with the mind of Christ have no time for selfish ambition or conceit. They assume others are better and smarter and take action for the interests of others as

well as themselves. The Lord Jesus sacrificed everything to obey the Father even to death on a cross and now His name is above every other name. No one has greater authority. His is a humility that leads to victory.

- Tenzig Norgay

When trying to think of someone who exemplifies this, (there are many) one person that comes to mind is a Nepalese sherpa named Tenzig Norgay. Though he died in 1986, he is still famous in mountaineering circles as the fellow who accompanied Sir Edmund Hillary's historic trip to the top of Mount Everest. While striving to be a great mountaineer himself, Norgay constantly assisted and put the needs of his companion, Sir Hillary first, and while Hillary is famed around the world for his accomplishment, he does not hesitate to give credit to his sherpa. In a speech he gave some years ago, Hillary mentioned that Norgay was but a step or two behind him when he reached the summit, and then he made some personal comments, describing Norgay as a skilled and wise mountaineer who was also one of the most thoughtful, decent and selfless human beings he had ever met. Hillary made it clear that he would have never reached the summit without him and that he held him in the highest respect. There are times in which humble service leads to honor.

- Verses 12-18

So let's look at the application given to us in this passage. For review, applications can involve how we act, how we speak, how we pray, how we believe or how this ties into our vision, and as is the case in many passages of Scripture, the application is in the passage itself, starting with verse twelve. We are to work out our salvation with fear and trembling. The idea is ongoing, in that you are to go into the business of living out with word and action the conviction of your heart, knowing that God (verse 13) is at work in you, giving you the desire to do this and then the power to follow through. I find that very comforting, because I don't trust my willpower and this promise assures me that I need not trust it. My "working out" is my endeavor but also the work of God. Verse 14-15 get specific; don't complain and dispute all the time. That alone will put you in contrast with the human condition. So much of humanity is in conflict or competition with each other. The mind of Christ exalts humility but also brings unity. Finally, we hold fast our trust in Christ in an age when that is fading, which really is nothing new. Christianity has always been controversial and has always had plenty of detractors. And pray for those facing persecution, always a real risk for people in different parts of the globe as it was for Paul and others like him in ancient times.

- Conclusion

To wrap us, the mind of Christ is something we strive to emulate but also that for which we pray as it is the work of God in the midst of our endeavors. The mind of Christ seeks the interests of others as well as their own, who knows that humble obedience to God is the truest route to greatness, who treats others as their betters and keeps a tight lid on grumbling and complaining. The mind of Christ sees each day as another opportunity to live out, work out the truth of the Gospel and the mind of Christ sees the world as God see it. Let's pray.