
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen (Romans 1:8)

The last time we were together we had a chance to marvel at the Apostle Peter and the things that come out of his mouth that cause us to ask, "What was Peter thinking?" The question that we will ask today is much more profound. "What was Jesus thinking?" This is not idle speculation. The Apostle Paul says in his letter to the Philippians: **In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.** Let the same kind of thinking dominate you as dominated Christ. Paul then gives us something to chew on about humble service based around the Son of God's state of humiliation. This refers to the time when Christ set aside the full use of his divine glory to carry out the work of our salvation. What was going through Jesus' head at that time? Today we see that the mindset of Christ centers around selfless service without setbacks.

Of course, we always associate selfless service with Christ and the Christian but think about the level of *selflessness* that was involved with the One who...

...being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

⁸And being found in appearance as a man...

If you were king in exile, living in a strange, impoverished land, not a day would go by where you wouldn't think constantly about all the wealth, power, freedom and comfort you've lost. The daily grind, the hourly frustrations, the constant futility we all labor under would have bothered Jesus then even more than they bother us today. Because he knew a better world. Obviously, bad things bother us too, but imagine not just *thinking* you don't deserve the bad thing that happened to you this week, but *knowing* it with perfect foresight and knowledge.

We come close to experiencing this when we suffer a set back in our health, our finances or our relationships. Those who are accustomed to a high paying job often have a very hard time adjusting to suddenly being in a situation where they have less. Those who are accustomed to living independently with a clean bill of health are shocked and deeply saddened when a sudden illness or accident lands them in a hospital or nursing home. Those who are accustomed to being surrounded by love and family often can't handle it when a divorce or some other traumatic event leaves them lonely or isolated. We remember when things were better and we tend to feel very sorry for ourselves when we think things are worse.

The world's solution to a setback like that can produce results but God warns us. **Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.** A mindset of selfish ambition and vain conceit says something like "I'm too good for the state I'm in." Such a mindset can lead a person to work hard and be very productive to benefit themselves but often leads them to overlook the needs of those around him. And what happens when the hardworking, productive person reaches a stage when they can't improve their situation? Old age or illness has taken away many of their faculties and all they can do is sit around and grow bitter about the setbacks they have had to suffer in life. By nature, we forget that the purpose of working hard and earning money is not just to benefit myself but to be able to generously give to benefit others. The purpose of carving out some free time is not just to recharge my batteries but to be available to serve God and others.

Now consider the mindset of Jesus! **Being in very nature God...he made himself nothing.** Take this one verse from Philippians 2 and impose it over every account you read of Jesus' earthly life and ministry. What must it have been like for God to go without regular food, sleep or other comforts to serve others? Most of us can't stand it when we have to stay at the office for an extra hour or a minor cold slows us down or we have to give up our Saturday to help someone out. Could you imagine giving up perfection? Or giving up never feeling pain or sadness? Or purpose? For years and years? Think about how little you can stand it when you see someone take something you know is yours and abuse it. Children don't like other kids taking their toys. Why? "They will wreck it!" Day after day, for his whole life, Jesus watched people do just that. With everything. Even his Father's good name.¹ Think of how, when Jesus was in the temple just

¹ Many of these insights come from a book by Jonathan Fisk "Echo: Unbroken Truth Worth Repeating Again" pp 141-143.

three days before going to the cross, how much it would have bothered him to hear the chief priests and elders of the people try to trip him up so they could condemn him (Matt 21:23).

Having the same mindset of Christ doesn't mean ignoring these little injustices we suffer in the world. Having the same mindset of Christ means feeling deeply every setback we might suffer with our health, our work or our relationships. "Just suck it up!" isn't part of the mindset of Christ. No, the mindset of Christ means really feeling these things that bother is in the world. Because they should bother us. You should feel like you were made for more than this, because you were. But however much your life bothers you right now, remember that it bothered Jesus more. And he felt the everyday pain and futility of life even more deeply than you do. An ordinary king, living in exile, living in a strange, impoverished land, would constantly think about all the wealth, power, freedom and comfort he lost and how he could work to win back his throne. But your Savior King **did not consider equality with God something to grasp for his own advantage** but his mind was set on you and what he needed to do to have you with him in eternity. And so having humbled himself to live a perfect life in your place without grumbling or complaint, **he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!**

This is selfless service! Jesus endured the day-to-day suffering because he knew the moment he made his own suffering stop, all of us would be lost. He knew that getting to that cross would change everything for everyone. And the humiliation of his powers and rights lasted his entire life and culminated in his death as the one sacrifice that could swallow the curse of sin once for all. His selfless service was slowly straightening out this crooked world. And after what seemed like a setback, what seemed like a terrible defeat...

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.**

This brief review of the humiliation and exaltation of Jesus will serve to remind us that there were no real setbacks in the life of our Lord. To be sure, there were things that bothered Jesus deeply. He hated to see people who should have known better reject him and the crowds fail to grasp what he was doing for them. But his selfless service for us carried him to glory and the forgiveness he won for us guarantees eternal, resurrection glory for you.

How different life becomes when we have the mindset of Christ. Paul writes his letter to the Philippians from prison and we summarize that letter in one word. Joy! Paul speaks frankly about his struggles but he doesn't see them as setbacks because he knows that in Christ "whatever happened to me will turn out for my deliverance" (Philippians 1:19). So, I'm going to prison? That won't feel good, but Paul says, "Now I will have more time to write letters of encouragement to my brothers and sisters in Christ!" "Things are going to cost more? Prices are going up?" That won't feel good but the Christian says, "Now I get to exercise more financial discipline, say 'No' to myself more and 'yes' to helping others and supporting the cause of the gospel. Only good can come from that!"

Even the great apostle was not an island unto himself but depended on his fellow Christians to bring him joy. **Make my joy complete by having the same mindset (of Christ).** Think of the joy we bring to our loved ones when we are humbly serving. Many of you have a grandma who would be happy to hear that they are serving at church, everyone has a grandchild that (even if they do not go to church) would be happy to hear that their grandparent is staying active. Care for others starts with remembering the law of love and seeing the ones that God has given me to love have a higher priority than I do.

Having the same mindset of Christ means recognizing that others inside the church and outside the church need what I have to give them and no work of service is to lowly for me. This mindset brings joy in many ways. How cool it is to find someone who has been through what you have been through. People in other organizations have that too. Think of AA, Cancer support groups, Griefshare. People in those groups have that unspoken bond. "You too?" They have all been ravaged by the same disease, shamed by the same sickness or devastated by the same loss. The Word and Sacraments of Jesus create that bond for us in the church on a very deep level. Those tables set up in the next room are a chance for us to discover these truths once again and let the same kind of thinking dominate you as dominated Christ Jesus. Have the same thoughts among yourselves as you have in your communion with Christ Jesus.

What a joy to think that these knees that will one day bow together to exclaim that **Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father** can now walk side by side together to work and to serve in Jesus' name to the joy and edifying of God's holy people. Amen.