

Lenten Midweek • April 1, 2020
St. John's Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA
Rev. Braun Campbell
Philippians 2:(1-4,) 5

“Let the Same Mind Be Among You”

Where's your mind going this Lent? I can guess at some of the possibilities. Like most of us, you could be dealing with a new routine. Since schools in our region are now closed – some to the end of the current academic year – many parents are trying to figure out how to juggle teleworking while schooling their children at home. Students also are adapting to this new reality and all the disruptions that have come with it. If you're not able to work right now, your thoughts might be preoccupied with managing bills or changing plans for the future. With stay-at-home orders are in place, chances are you might be starting to feel a little stir-crazy. And if you're spending a lot more time streaming things at home, maybe you, too, can't help but notice how often people in movies and TV shows are touching their faces and –gasp!– standing less than six feet from each other. As I've seen others comment, I didn't expect to be giving up quite so much this Lent!

Here at St. John's, we've been spending our midweek services around God's Word from Philippians 2:5-11. That'll be the Epistle reading this coming weekend, Palm Sunday / The Sunday of the Passion. You're welcome to go back on our website (www.sjlc.com) to review what we've talked about so far: how Jesus, God the Son, came down into his creation to be the servant-rescuer that you and I have needed. If you've been with us on this Lenten journey, today's focus for this final midweek Lenten service might come as a surprise. We're going back to the beginning.

It all comes back to this: “*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...*” That's the preface to the “Hymn of Christ” we've been hearing this Lent. St. Paul is writing a letter of encouragement for his fellow Christians, directing our attention to the Savior who knows us and our need. Jesus isn't merely the model for living a God-centered life; he's the One who makes that life possible.

In the lead-up to our Lenten text, Paul writes, “*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*” Through Jesus, God's people have encouragement. We have comfort from love. We have participation in the Spirit. We have affection and sympathy. Through Jesus, we may even have the same mind.

Here in Philippians, the phrase that Paul uses for “mind” isn't limited to thinking. Paul's not encouraging the Christians there in the early church towards simple agreement on who Jesus is. It's not about head-knowledge. This “mind” that he's putting before us is closer to *wisdom*. It's about putting into practice what you know. It's about the orientation of the redeemed life. **It's about attitude.**

In the Hymn of Christ, we've seen our Savior's attitude. He's shown it by humbling and emptying himself, setting aside the glory that was his as God the Son, coming down into his creation to be human like you and me. He's shown it by serving us. He served us by living the perfect life that we haven't, following God's design for humanity. He served us by going to suffer and give up his life on the cross, in order that you and I might have life with God forever. **Jesus' attitude is love in action.** That's how God responds to our need. This is the attitude, the “same mind,” which Paul encourages all of God's redeemed people to share. **His attitude is for you.**

You and I – broken, anxious, fearful, stir-crazy, stressed-out people that we may be – are being given a new attitude, one that that comes from outside of ourselves. The Holy Spirit is working on you, even now. He's calling and equipping you to develop a Christlike attitude of humility, of active love in the service and care for others. You're being shaped, like the Philippians, to be an agent of God's grace in the lives of the people around you. The particulars of that shaping will differ from person to person. Even so, we who follow Jesus will increasingly share his same mind, his attitude of grace.

This Lent has been unlike any other in living memory. There's no denying that truth. But amidst all the disruption to our daily routines, God's grace in Christ remains constant. We have encouragement. We have comfort from love. We have participation in the Spirit. We have affection and sympathy. God is giving us the occasion to use His gifts in a time when they are sorely needed. As He shapes us, building us up in that common Christlike attitude, you and I may humbly count others more significant than ourselves.

Look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others – especially in times such as these.
Let the same mind be among you, which is indeed yours in Christ Jesus.

Amen.