Have the Mind of Christ

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Preacher: Philip Stewart

[0:00] And as we come to God's Word, let's pray together. Almighty God, we come once more into your presence this morning in the name of your Son, the Lord Jesus.

We remember the request of those Greeks as they came to the disciples at that feast time so long ago. Sirs, we would see Jesus. And today, O God, we ask that this morning we might encounter Jesus in all his glory and majesty and splendor that we will meet with him through your Word.
We ask this in his name. Amen. Reading then from verse 1. 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 rivalry 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.
Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.
[1:39] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.
Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
Father, and God will bless this reading of his word this morning. A couple of years ago, I went to visit the Royal Yacht Britannia.
It was a fascinating experience. You can wander the decks, see the state room where the Queen entertained foreign heads of state, look into the Royal Family's private rooms, view the officer's mess and the bridge.
[3:06] But most interesting of all was the engine room. It was a vast space filled with shining boilers, gleaming copper pipework, and hundreds of gauges and dials.

It's the very heart of the ship. Here the engines produced the power that propelled the ship forward through the oceans. Here the power was produced, not just to propel the ship, but to heat it, light it, produce electricity for the kitchens and the navigation and communication equipment.
The engine room was the most vital part of the ship. It produced the power that made the ship what she was. Well, this paragraph here in Philippians 2 is the engine room of the epistle.
It's here in the lines of this passage that amazing energy and power are released. It's the power that drives the whole of the letter. It's the power that in chapter 1 enables Paul to endure prison and write the moving words, for me to live is Christ and to die is gain.
It's the power that in chapter 2 drives Epaphroditus to endanger his life for the sake of the church. And it's the power that's to enable the Philippian church to live ever increasingly to God's glory.
[4:32] In fact, the very truth of these verses has unleashed power that has turned our world upside down. The truth of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection has changed our world forever.

It's converted men and women on every continent. It has changed lives, altered behavior, reunited families, restored relationships and changed destinies.
And if you're a Christian this morning, then the power of Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection is changing your very mind. Gordon Fee writes about this passage, In Pauline Ethics, the principle is love, the pattern is Christ and the power of the Spirit, all of which have been provided for in the

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death and resurrection of Jesus.
This passage teaches us that Christians, those who are, as verse 1 states, in Christ, who know his love, who participate in the Holy Spirit, are to have the same mind.
And what mind is that? Verse 5 tells us it's the very mind of Christ. Three points this morning, all of which arise from verse 5.
[5:57] First, verse 6 to 7, Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, a mind that doesn't hold on to its rights.

Second, from verse 7 to 8, Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, a mind that's humble and obedient. And third, in verse 9 to 11, Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, a mind that seeks the glory of God the Father.
First then, verses 6 to 7, a mind that doesn't hold on to its rights. You know, for most in our world who even begin to think of Jesus Christ at Christmas time, the story begins at Bethlehem.
But the Bible tells us that for us, the real story begins in heaven. Look at verse 5. Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.
Bethlehem was not Jesus' beginning. He didn't just come into being at his birth. He didn't simply become God's son at Bethlehem. He was in the form of God.
[7:20] He was equal with God before the world ever was. He was in the form of God. The word form means our nature, the essential you that never changes.

For example, you all have been a baby, a child, a teenager, an adult, but you've never ceased to be a human being. Your form is humanity and it has never changed.
That is your nature. And so the NIV translates this sentence, he was in very nature God.
He possessed every attribute that belonged to God. He's all-powerful, almighty, all-knowing, all-holy, all-majestic, existing in Trinity, in loving relationship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.
But then, back in heaven, on the throne, worshipped and adored by all those around him, he does this most amazing thing.
[8:31] Look at verse 6. who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant.

Look at what he thought. Look at the mind of Christ. He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. He's equal with God, but he doesn't consider the glories and the privileges of heaven, something to be grasped and held on to.
Instead, verse 7 tells us the astonishing truth, but he made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant. You know, we cannot possibly begin to imagine the wonder and the splendor and the majesty of what it means to be in the form of God.
God. And yet, Jesus Christ didn't regard that as something to be held on to, something to be cherished at all costs, something to be grasped and never let go, but he made himself nothing.
Why do we find that so astonishing? Why does it go against every natural instinct you have? It's because we are fallen.
[9:56] Remember how the serpent persuaded Eve to disobey God back in the Garden of Eden. Eat the fruit. You'll be like God. You will be somebody.

And since then, human beings have been constantly grasping after God-likeness. We want to make up our own rules about life. We want to decide for ourselves what is right and wrong.
We are not in the form of God and yet we grasp after it. We want to be our own gods. We don't want to become nothing or nobody.
We all want to be somebody. But he is so different. And so God the Son, the second person of the Trinity, the great somebody, makes himself a nothing and nobody.
how does he do it? The words literally mean he emptied himself. Look at verse 7. He made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant.
[11:07] He emptied himself by taking, by taking the form of a servant, by being born in the likeness of men. And the focus here is not on what he lost or left behind, but on what he took.

Donald MacLeod calls this subtraction by addition. He makes himself nothing by taking the form of a servant.
And the one who was in the form of God now takes the form of a servant and is born in the likeness of men. The one who is in very nature God now takes the very nature of a servant.

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But look at the glory of the incarnation. He doesn't exchange the form of God for the form of man. He adds the form of man to what he already is, the form of God.
And he becomes Emmanuel, God with us. But just look at the form he adds. It's the form of a servant.
[12:21] Perhaps when you think of a servant you think of a Jane Austen period drama. Black-suited, white-gloved, stiff-upper-lips butler. But he doesn't take that form of a servant.

He takes the form of a slave. One without rights. One who's a nobody. And so the second person of the Trinity takes the very nature of a servant, a slave, a nobody.
How does he think? What is his mind? He refuses to cling to his rights. He decides to leave all the glory of heaven.
Why? Why did he do it? Why did he come to Bethlehem on that first Christmas? Well, our passage this morning tells us clearly why he came. Look at verse 4.
Let each of you look not only to his own interests but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped.
[13:37] He did this great thing in the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, a mind that doesn't hold on to its rights but lets them go in the interests of others.

And you have this mind in Christ Jesus and this is the kind of mind that through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that God is renewing in you.
Do you jealously guard your rights? Do you think of yourself as somebody? Do you ever want to respond to someone? Don't you know who I am?
I've been coming to this church for 40 years. I'm reformed. I'm somebody. Friends, compared to him, the great somebody, we are nobodies.
Think like him. Have a mind like him. Put others' interests before your own. He will change you to the mind of Christ.
[14:46] Second, then, verse 7 to 8, a mind that is humble and obedient. And now, in the form of God and the form of man, he comes to earth.

He steps into history. He enters our world. Emmanuel, God with us. What did he look like? What would you have seen?
The Nicene Creed reminds us that he was the only begotten son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father.
Father. But what was he like? Verse 8 says he was found in human form. But it's not the same word translated form in verses 6 and 7.
We saw there that the one who was in very nature God took the nature of a servant. And now here in verse 8, the NIV says he was found in appearance as a man.
[15:57] He looked just like we do. He came into this world the way you did. He was a real child, a real baby.

We sang in our carol services. He was little, weak, and helpless. Tears and smiles like us, he knew. He was found in appearance as a man, a real human being.
And when the shepherds left their flocks in the hillsides of Judea and came in wonder to the stable and gazed in the manger, what did they see? They saw a baby.
Not with a halo like you see in the Christmas cards, not with light radiating from his body like you see in medieval art. He looked just like every other newborn child had ever seen.
He was found in appearance as a man. Isaiah had written of him long before he'd ever come. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him.
[17:02] Nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He looked just like any other man. He was born into poverty. He grew up in Nazareth, the kind of town that made one of his disciples ask, can anything good come out of there?

Joseph was a carpenter and he became one too. What then? Did he come all that way to show us how to overcome your disadvantages in life?
How to fulfill your dreams? Is his the story of the working class boy from Nazareth who finally makes good? No, it's not. Look at verse 8.

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And being found in human form, he humbled himself. Now he's in the form of God. He's emptied himself by taking the form of a servant.
He's in appearance as a man, but he's going to stoop lower still. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
[18:16] Remember the reason for this journey. from the throne to the manger, and from the manger to the cross. Verse 4 tells us it was in the interest of others.

It was in the interest of men and women of this fallen world. It was in your interest. And what's in your interest? You know, Paul tells us in Romans 5 and 19 that through the disobedience of one, many were made sinners.
sinners. And because of Adam's disobedience in Eden, he rejected God's authority, broke his law, rebelled against his rules. When he tried to make himself somebody, we've all been born sinners. We're men and women who are fallen. We're deeply flawed. We're broken. Our very human nature is twisted and corrupt. And though we know all that God requires of us, still we disobey his laws. And the Bible warns us that the wages of sin is death and because of our sin we will die and be separated from God for eternity. And our position is hopeless, terrifying.
[19:31] We are lost. But Paul goes on in Romans 5, for just as through the disobedience of one man, the many were made sinners.

So also through the obedience of one man, the many shall be made righteous. And who was that one man who was obedient? Who was that one man who kept God's law every day of his life?
It was none other than Jesus Christ, God's only Son. And as God, he doesn't hold on to his rights and privileges, but instead takes the form of a servant. And now as man, he humbled himself and becomes obedient.
Obedient to the point of death. Adam was disobedient, breaking God's law. We are disobedient, breaking God's law every day of our lives.
But he's perfectly obedient, keeping God's law to the letter for the 33 years of his life. And he's obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
[20:44] Not looking to his own interests, but to our interests, my interests, your interests, he willingly goes forth to die, even the death of the cross.

The Romans reserved crucifixion for those who were nobodies, those who had no rights. And the Jews looked on crucifixion with absolute horror.
For their law, Deuteronomy 21 says this, anyone who's hung on a tree is under God's curse, under the wrath and curse of God.
But he's obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. It's the very lowest point. It's the end of the journey from heaven, from existence in the form of God, to death on a cross, from joy and love and fellowship in heaven, to the awful moment where he cries, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Walter Hansen writes about these verses. They take us down, down, down, to the deepest, darkest, hellhole in human history to see the horrific torture, unspeakable abuse and bloody execution of a slave on a cross.
[22:17] What humility, what obedience, what love, what a mind, the mind of Christ. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, a mind that's humble and obedient.

Have you been encouraged by Christ? Have you been comforted by his love? Have you shared in his spirit? How then can you look on the manger? How then can you look on Gethsemane?
How then can you look on Calvary and do anything from rivalry or conceit? Have a mind that's humble, the mind of Christ.
Thirdly, verses 9 to 11. A mind that seeks the glory of God the Father.
Verse 8 reads, Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.
[23:27] Therefore, therefore, what would our world expect? Therefore, he was buried. Therefore, he was forgotten.

Therefore, he was simply a great disappointment. Therefore, his followers scattered and disappeared, trained as a carpenter, executed age 33.
therefore, he turned out to be a complete and utter failure. But what does God say? Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place.

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Therefore, God exalted him. That stoop, that journey, that career from heaven to Bethlehem, to Nazareth, to a cross, down, down, down, leads to exaltation.
We expect exaltation to come by ambition, to come by ruthlessness, to come by elbowing others out of the way to get to the top. But he is exalted by making himself nothing, by taking the form of a servant, by humbling himself, by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
[24:46] he didn't look to his own interests. He didn't count equality with God a thing to be grasped. He humbled himself, because he wasn't looking to his own interests, because he was looking to yours.

And that's why God exalted him today to the highest place, and given him that name that is above every name, because of what he's accomplished for sinners, sinners, because his death wasn't simply a tragedy, because his death wasn't just a miscarriage of justice, because his death wasn't just the execution of a man without rights.
It was the death of God's obedient servant. Isaiah wrote these words about the servant of God long before he ever came. But he was pierced for our transgressions.
He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. And Isaiah goes on, and now God is speaking, therefore I will give him a portion with the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, for he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.
Even death on a cross, it was for our transgressions, it was for our iniquities, it was for our sin, but he brings us peace, he brings us healing, he forgives and restores.
[26:36] And so Isaiah says, God gives him a portion of the great, but Paul goes even further, God has exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus Christ is Lord. What does that mean? It comes at the very climax of this passage, so it must mean something really important.
Paul is alluding again to an Old Testament passage, this time Isaiah 45, and Isaiah says this, and it's God speaking, turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else.
By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered an integrity, a word that will not be revoked, before me every knee will bow, by me every tongue will swear.
God says, before me every knee will bow, by me every tongue will swear. But instead of the words before me in Philippians 2, we have the words at the name of Jesus.
[28:02] At the name of Jesus every knee will bow. At the name of Jesus, every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord.

Paul is saying that Jesus is none other than God. In the Old Testament God's name was Yahweh, Jehovah, the Creator, the Almighty, the All-Powerful, the All-Holy, the Covenant God.
And that name was often translated Lord. Jesus is Lord. Jesus is Yahweh. Jesus alone is Creator, Almighty, All-Powerful God of History.
Jesus is Lord. And because of that, one day this world will bow before Him and acknowledge that He alone is Lord. Why should we bow to Jesus?
Why should we come to Jesus? Why should we become Christians? Why should we accept the Gospel? Is it because He'll solve your problems? Is it because He'll make your life better?
[29:08] Is it because He'll bring you fulfillment like you've never known? He may do all these things, but that's not the ultimate reason that we must bow to Jesus.

It's because He is Lord. It is because God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name. It may be this morning that you feel you've no obvious problems that you need Christ to solve.
Life is going well. You're fulfilled in all that you do. And you think you can live without this Christ. But today God is confronting you with this fact in Philippians.
You must bow to Jesus because Jesus is Lord. And one day every knee will bow to Him and every tongue confess that He is Lord.
You're those who have rejected Him will grudgingly, reluctantly, spit it out from clenched teeth as they're confronted with the exalted Christ that Jesus is Lord.

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[30:17] And they will glorify God the Father as He displays His justice in their eternal punishment. But those who have gladly embraced Him here on this earth will joyfully shout, Jesus is Lord.

And they will glorify God the Father as He displays His mercy, grace, and love on them for all eternity. Jesus is Lord.
Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, a mind that seeks the glory of God the Father. Glorify God the Father by confessing that Jesus is Lord.
Finally, if you're a Christian this morning, the power of Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection is changing your very mind into the mind of Christ.
A mind that doesn't hold on to its rights. A mind that's humble and obedient. A mind that seeks the glory of God the Father and the result, a church that has the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.
[31:33] A church that lives for the glory of God the Father and awaits that final day when at the name of Jesus every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord.

May that be us at the Tron here this morning. Let's pray together. Amen. Almighty God, we bow in Your presence.
We thank You for the wonder of what You have done for us in Jesus Christ. We thank You for how He looked not only on His own things but also on the interests of others. And for us He came all the way to the cross.
Lord, we gladly fall before Him this morning and acknowledge that He is Lord to Your glory. Amen.
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