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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
March 26, 2017
4th Sunday in Lent

Scripture Lessons: Hosea 5:15-6:3 Passion: Trial before Caiaphas
Hymns: 390; 159; 165; 401; (242:1-3)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord
and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Matthew 20:17-28

¹⁷ Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ¹⁸ "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, ¹⁹ and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again."

²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.

²¹ And He said to her, "What do you wish?"

She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."

²² But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask.

Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

They said to Him, "We are able."

²³ So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared by My Father."

²⁴ And when the ten heard *it*, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let

him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, God my Savior, dear fellow Redeemed:

INTRO: What was He thinking?

Most often when we ask this question it is because we think any sensible person would have seen that a bad result was going to happen from the actions performed by someone. We ask, “What was he thinking?” because we are simply puzzled by this person’s actions. We would never have done what this other person did. We would have had enough sense of self-preservation to know better.

This is certainly what clouded the disciples’ minds each time Jesus spoke of how He was going to go up to Jerusalem where He would suffer many things at the hands of sinners, and die, and the third rise again.

“What is He thinking?” had to be on their minds as Peter challenged Jesus and rebuked Him the first time Jesus spoke of His sufferings and death. That is still the basic mind set of mankind as they consider the gospel, a message which we know so well because the Spirit opened our hearts to believe. It is a message that we have known and understood so long that sometimes we forget how rare and unusual a message it is. So again this morning the Spirit would instruct us once again in --

THEME: Knowing the Mind of Christ.

What our text reveals

I. Jesus as Being Mindful of His Mission of Salvation.

Matthew 20:17-19 ¹⁷ Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ¹⁸ “Behold, we

are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death,¹⁹ and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.”

Jesus was revealing to the twelve exactly what He was thinking. Jesus wasn't being foolhardy. Jesus was not proceeding to Jerusalem with the thought that nothing would happen to Him there. He knew exactly what was going to happen. Jesus knew it all, just as the prophets foretold. Jesus understood that He would be taken by His enemies, that He would suffer, yes, suffer many things at their hands. Jesus knew that they would turn Him over to the Gentiles, and that the Romans would crucify Him. Jesus knew, He fully understood that in all this He would not only be suffering at the hands of men, but that He would also be forsaken by God. Jesus knew that going to Jerusalem meant that He would die.

This takes us back to the question of the incredulous, “What was He thinking?” Did Jesus have a death wish? Not at all. Then why would Jesus go to Jerusalem if it meant He would die? We need to come back to the statement that Jesus was mindful of His mission of salvation. His life wasn't about Him and what He could gain from this life, not in the way of the world. His mindset was on us and saving us from our sin; saving us from death and hell. Jesus knew the plan of His Father in heaven. Jesus understood the sacrifice needed to be made to take away the sin of the world. Jesus also trusted His Father in heaven that what the Scriptures foretold would come to pass, on the third day Jesus would rise again! Jesus reveals His thinking, His mindset in the final words of our text:

Matthew 17:28 “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Jesus was mindful of His mission of salvation. He boldly went forward to suffering and death AND resurrection to successfully complete that mission, to serve **us**, to gain life everlasting for **us**.

So we go on to the next portion of our text and we see evidence of --

II. The Corrupted Mind of Man.

Matthew 17:20-24 ²⁰ Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him.

²¹ And He said to her, "What do you wish?"

She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."

²² But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

They said to Him, "We are able."

²³ So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but *it is for those* for whom it is prepared by My Father."

²⁴ And when the ten heard *it*, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers."

Well, for us I think that same question comes popping right back up: "What in the world were they thinking?" It is easy for us to look back on them and see their foolishness, to see their ambition, to see their failure to understand the nature of the kingdom of God. It is also easy for us to think that we would never think like that, to be so parochial, so puerile, so vain in our thinking. I want to remind you that these were not just some "newbies" to following Jesus. This was Salome, Jesus' aunt who had faithfully followed the Lord in His travels with a number of other women who faithfully provided for His daily needs. She followed to the cross where together with Jesus' mother they watched Jesus die. She was among the women who first arrived at the tomb on the resurrection morning. You get my point; she was devoted to the Lord as the Christ, the Messiah.

Her sons James and John were among Jesus' closest companions, those whom He trusted to take them into special circumstances. They had followed Jesus and learned from him for over three years leading up to this incident. Again, my point is that even as they were so off in their thinking, so we also can be off in our thinking as we face the varied circumstances and challenges of life, even as we live lives devoted to Jesus. It is very easy for the mind of man to start thinking, "I deserve some credit, some reward for all I've done for Christ."

It isn't so ridiculous for these two very close friends, even relatives of Jesus to start thinking they should be just as close to Jesus when He enters His glory. That is what happens with the corrupt mindset of man. We think we have it all figured out. We superimpose our thinking, and yes, even our dreams and then ambitions on the gospel of our salvation. We dare to think, "This is the life the Lord should lay out for me here on earth and hereafter in eternity." It doesn't make you a terrible sinner. Well, you already are that. So am I! It just shows how even Christians are influenced by the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh.

Jesus challenged them, gave them an opportunity to back away. He pointed out that they didn't know what they asked. He went a little farther returning to the reality of His coming passion. Were they ready to endure that cup of sufferings? Were they ready to die with the Lord? They answered quickly in the affirmative. What were they thinking? Well, maybe they just weren't; at least not thinking things through to their conclusion. They hadn't yet grasped the suffering that lay before Jesus, much less what might come upon them for Jesus and the gospel's sake. Their minds were focused on glory, and power, and positions of honor. Ambition. It was all about personal ambition.

Jesus assured them that they would indeed drink the cup which He would drink and be baptized with the baptism with which He was to be baptized.

Well, the other disciples must have seen that something was going on between Jesus on the one hand and Salome, and James and John on the other. When they figured out what those others were up to they were more than a little put out! What were the other ten disciples thinking then? "What makes them so special? Why should they get more attention or reward or glory? I've given up as much, (maybe more) than they ever had!"

When Christians make their church life, their discipleship about self, it leads to dissension, and hard feelings, not love, not service.

And so as long as we carry about in our bodies this sinful flesh, there will be no perfect Christians, and no perfect congregations, or church bodies. We still need to learn more of the mind of Christ.

We need --

III. A Spirit Reset for Our Minds.

Matthew 20:25-28 ²⁵ But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷ And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

The disciples’ mindset was like the world. They were all vying for the top spot with Jesus, to be superior to their peers. Jesus pointed out how the world works, and how those in power lord it over those whom they supposedly “serve.” It is not to be so with us. The disciples were to humble themselves, to act as a slave who submits personal will to the will of those whom he serves. They needed to observe how Jesus, the very Son of God lived among them as One who served, as the One who gave His life to pay for their sins.

That is the line the Spirit uses to give a reset to our minds. Jesus came not to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many, to give His life a ransom for you! He put you before Himself. Jesus put YOU before Himself! Now “**let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus**” (Philippians 2:5).

But we live in this world, and it is just so easy to be like the world, as the disciples experienced. You know a week later, just a week later, on the night before Jesus died, He had to teach this lesson again, with almost the same exact words for almost the same exact argument. That is how pernicious, how persuasive the philosophy of this world can be with us as well. So hear the exhortation of the Apostle Paul:

Romans 12:2 “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Is there any hope for us? Yes, but only by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit. After Pentecost, after the Spirit had filled the hearts of the Apostles, they knew the mind of Christ. They boldly testified and did not back down. They did share in the sufferings of Christ. They served one another and many, many others with the love given them by Christ. And they were beaten and commanded to stop. How did they respond? We read in --

Acts 5:41-42 “So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. ⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.”

May the Spirit grant us by His grace and power the reset of our minds that we may go on living --

Conclusion: Knowing the Mind of Christ.

When the Spirit of our God has opened our minds to grasp the wonder of what has been revealed for us in Holy Scripture then we can in some small way begin to appreciate the mind of Christ. Therein the grace and righteousness of God is revealed. The wonder of His love for us underserving sinners who are in fact unworthy recipients of every blessing. We are eager to join the heavenly choir to sing the praises of Jesus, the Lamb of God who has taken away the sins of the world. We sing with that heavenly choir:

Revelation 5:12-13 “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain

To receive power and riches and wisdom,
And strength and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying:

“Blessing and honor and glory and power
Be to Him who sits on the throne,
And to the Lamb, forever and ever!”

AMEN.

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.