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St. Paul's Lutheran Church
2100 16th Street SW
Austin, MN 55912-1749
Pastor Ted Barthels
Sermon preached on
October 15, 2017
19th after Pentecost

Scripture Lessons: Ezekiel 18:1-4, 25-32; Matthew 21:28-32
Hymns: 361; 763; 307; 409:1

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

Sermon Text: Philippians 2:1-11

Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ²fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³*Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

⁵Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. ⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God.

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

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

INTRO: Looking out for #1

Human nature tells us that if we don't look out for ourselves, no one else will. You can't really depend on anyone. Others will only let you down when you need them the most. Surely that is what the people in Puerto Rico feel these days. They were hit hard by one hurricane and then even harder by another. The aftereffects are utter devastation. So they need help, and they need it now and they need it fast. It seems that no matter who, where, or when such disasters hit people expect the government to work miracles. The expectation comes out of desperation. The government can't work miracles. In fact warnings were issued to people in Texas that if they were in such a disaster zone they would likely be on their own for several days. The people in Puerto Rico had no place to go. It's an island and the whole island was hit. Many have been on their own for weeks with no end in sight.

People make accusations and others defend themselves saying, "I did what I could! Really? Maybe. Maybe not. Looking out for #1.

Now let's enlarge this picture. A far greater and more widespread disaster struck the world when "*sin entered the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men for all have sinned.*" (Romans 5:12) It meant widespread disaster with eternal consequences. This disaster brings with it the wild fires of hell. Imagine what the people in the Napa Valley area of California are experiencing this week-end as the dry winds are sweeping down from the mountains and feeding the fury of the firestorms. Terror and death has come down on so many. Many have barely escaped with their lives. Others didn't. What if they didn't even realize the firestorm was coming? What if they had no warning? And so it is with the firestorm of eternal death and hell that is coming upon so many in this world, so many millions of our own countrymen. What if God said, "You're on your own. You better look out for #1. I AM!" But the Lord didn't do that. Luther wrote of God's response in one of his hymns:

"But God beheld my wretched state
Before the world's foundation,
And, mindful of His mercies great,
He planned my soul's salvation.
A father's heart He turned to me,
Sought my redemption fervently;
He gave His dearest Treasure.

“He spoke to His beloved Son: ‘Tis time to have compassion.

Then go bright Jewel of My Crown,

And bring to man salvation; From sin and sorrow set him free,

Slay bitter death for him that he May live with Thee forever.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 387:4-5)

How did the Son of God respond to this assignment to save all those sinful, rebellious, corrupt, hateful, selfish people in the world? The quick evaluation of the situation could have been, “They aren’t worth it. They brought it upon themselves. Most won’t even appreciate anything we do for them anyway.” **That wasn’t the mind of Christ!**

“The Son obeyed His Father’s will Was born of virgin mother,

And God’s good pleasure to fulfill He came to be my Brother.

No garb of pomp or power He wore,

A servant’s form, like mine, He bore To lead the devil captive.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 387:6)

This is the mind of Christ which our text reveals more fully for our growth in grace, for our building up in faith and life so that we, by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit, might --

THEME: Know the Mind of Christ.

The Spirit reveals for us --

I. The Incomprehensible Mind of Christ.

Philippians 2:5-9 “Christ Jesus, ... ⁶ being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷ but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross.

If we are to appreciate the mind of Christ we need to understand where it all began, and who He was and is from eternity. God, the Word, the creating power. “*He was in the beginning with God.*” ³ *All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*” (John 1:3-4) He had the name, the glory, the power, the divine majesty. He had it all. He needed nothing. He set

it all aside, making Himself of no reputation. Isaiah says of the Servant of the Lord, “*Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*”² *For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, And as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him.*” (Isaiah 53:1-2)

The Son of God came down to earth not as a spectacle so that people would consider Him just so awesome. What did people say? “Isn’t this Joseph’s Son?” And they rejected Jesus. He came as a servant, a slave, the Servant of the Lord, to do His Father’s bidding. He came as a man, a human being, one of us. Being one of us He lived as one of us. He humbled Himself. He didn’t use His divine power to make life easy in any way. He lived life with all the challenges that this sin corrupted world throws at any and all of us. He dealt with temptation, *He was tempted just like we are, but without sin.* (Hebrews 4:15) He humbled Himself not only in consideration of His Father’s will, but in consideration of our need. He humbled Himself and put our need for salvation ahead of escaping the sufferings of the cross. He humbled Himself and was obedient unto death; He did not need to die. Jesus had not sinned, not at all, not ever. He died because of *our* sin. He died *for us* as the ransom for *our* sin, to be the atoning sacrifice for *our* sin. “*We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son.*” (Romans 5:12)

This is the mind of Christ and it is incomprehensible. People just don’t think like that. When Jesus explained and explained repeatedly for the disciples that it was necessary for Him to go up to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of His enemies, they didn’t get it. To them it was nonsense. Their response was that Jesus shouldn’t think like that, much less talk like that. Peter rebuked the Lord, and this directly after Peter had confessed that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God. Peter didn’t understand the mind of Christ. It was incomprehensible. And so it is for all men, except by the working of the Holy Spirit. Only the Spirit can lead us to understand and confess **now** what all men will be forced to confess at the last day.

Because of the wonder of Jesus’ humility, because of the mind of Christ that led Him to be obedient unto death, even the shameful, torturous death of the cross --

Philippians 2:9-11 “God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, ¹¹and *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

And so we praise His glorious name for the wonder of grace that has come to us because of Jesus’ humility, because of the wonder of **the mind of Christ**. And of course among us that praise doesn’t wait for the last day. The Spirit has opened our hearts to believe. The Spirit has made us comprehend the incomprehensible. We praise Him singing:

O Jesus, King most wonderful, Thou Conqueror renowned, Thou
sweetness most ineffable, In whom all joys are found.

When once thou visitest the heart, Then truth begins to shine,
Then earthly vanities depart, Then kindles love divine.”

(The Lutheran Hymnal 361:1,2)

It isn’t just words. We are completely changed. We are made new creatures, even though we still struggle with the presence of the old adam and sin still plagues us everyday. We now have the mind of Christ.

II. Let this Mind Be in You which Was also in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:1-4 “Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ²fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³*Let* nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

What’s this all about? It starts with the spiritual blessings we have and know in Christ Jesus. The consolation of Christ, and the depth of His love and the peace of sins forgiven. The knowledge of the communion we have with the Lord and the presence of the Holy

Spirit in our hearts. If these things mean anything, (and they do mean so much; we are rich in every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus) then let us be likeminded. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Love your brothers and sisters in Christ. Know the union that comes in knowing and then sharing the truth. Be of one mind, of one spirit. Recognize and root out hypocrisy and envy and all the impure affections of our old man. Love as Christ has loved us. Forsake selfish ambition. Don't worry about getting the credit for what you have done. Find your satisfaction in the needs of others being filled. Humble yourself. In lowliness of mind esteem others, (not self esteem) esteem others as better than oneself. The mind of Christ is not obsessed with self-interest, but the interests of others. That is why we are what we are, children of God and heirs of everlasting life. Mind of Christ! Let us strive for that wonder of grace for others, even if it cost us in worldly goods or comfort. Such is the mind of Christ. We are His servants. I saw it on a T-shirt on just some guy in Hawaii, "Created to serve Jesus!" Exactly! We were not created as new creatures by the Holy Spirit to serve self. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus created to serve Jesus. May the Spirit live in our hearts that we too might humble ourselves, that we might know the mind of Christ.

AMEN.

"Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Amen. (Romans15:13)