

Have the Same Mindset as Christ Jesus

Philippians 2:1-11

Key Verse: 5

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”

Merry Christmas! I know you came to hear a Christmas message, but were you confused by the passage? There are no angels singing, no shepherds with their sheep, no Magi worshipping, and no sleeping baby Jesus in a manger. But in fact, this is Paul’s real life Christmas message to us: it answers the question, **“How does Christ, born in a manger, enable us to love and heal and live in a broken and hurting and angry 21st century world?”** When we think about Jesus, the baby in the manger, it’s easy just to think, “Wow! He looks cute and peaceful!” and then go on hurting and being hurt in conflicts. Apostle Paul, however, in this passage helps us to see and have the mindset of Christ Jesus in a manger. And in this mindset of baby Jesus we will find the fundamental solution to our relational issues, and find restoration and healing in our 21st century churches, families and with one another. So let us learn the mindset of baby Jesus today.

I. Three Biblical principles for beautiful relationships with one another (1-4)

Before we engage with others in a relationship, there is one thing we should do first. Look at verse 1. **“Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion...”** In this verse, the word “If” may be confusing, like Paul is asking us whether we really have these things. However, “if” can be translated as “since” in Greek. Therefore, *since* you have these blessings: encouragement, comfort, common sharing, tenderness and compassion from Jesus... **The first principle is: know what we have from Jesus.** Not just know, but also to enjoy them. Since we have already received from the triune God encouragement, comfort and common sharing, then we can also have tenderness and compassion toward others. These spiritual blessings become our foundation and the power source in all our relationships with others.

When we are filled with these spiritual blessings, we feel safe and secure, confident and free just as Paul said, **“Who can be against us if God is for us...”**(Ro 8:31b). If we enjoy those spiritual blessings from the Trinity, we don’t try desperately like a dry sponge to soak up affirmation and good opinion and encouragement from others. But if we begin our relationship with others with

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something else than what we have received from God, we become easily indifferent, critical, confrontational, defensive and disrespectful toward others. So hold onto any encouragement, any comfort and any common sharing in the Spirit, any tenderness and compassion from God, no matter how little or small they may be, for our comfort from God is the true and living source for our spiritual health and relationships with others.

What then does Paul tell us to do with the blessings from God? Look at verse 2. “...**Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.**” The second principle for beautiful relationships is: be one in mind and love and spirit. But is this possible with people from different cultural backgrounds, from different generations, different pasts and upbringings and education?

Last Sunday, our orchestra and chorus offered beautiful songs to our Lord Jesus Christ. For three weeks we practiced. At first, most of us were busy learning their own part, looking at the music, and counting rhythm individually. Thus, when we got together it sounded like terrible noise, like 50 people doing 50 different things at the same time. But as we kept practicing together, we realized that each person should listen to the others, and most importantly, look up at the conductor and follow his beat and his interpretation. And a miracle happened. Likewise, when we fix our eyes upon Jesus and follow his leading, we can have unity in diversity in the body of Christ.

If you still think it is very hard to become one, why is it so? Look at verses 3-4. “**Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.**” *Selfish ambition, self-centered (vain) conceit, self-value and self-interest above others’* break the unity in the body of Christ. And the third principle is this: know the true enemy- the enemy of self.

Some may think of others as the enemy. My boss, parents or children, shepherd, or my spouse are my enemies! But in truth, our real enemy is self. Next time when you get in a conflict with someone, say to yourself, “She is not the enemy. My enemy is “self.” Satan always says, “Take care of yourself, your life, your ideas, your opinions, your interests, your health, your money, your time, your families, your sleep, etc., are more important than any others.” Self within us, precisely our old self, cries out, “I, my, me, mine! What about me?” The Bible, however, says, “**Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in**

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humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

How can we overcome our selfishness and pride? Apostle Paul says that it is “in humility.” What is humility? If self is our enemy, then “selflessness” is humility, isn’t it? C.S. Lewis said, “**Humility is not thinking less of yourself** (*I’m no good, I’m useless, I’m full of sins*), **it’s thinking of yourself less.**” More importantly, humility is thinking of Jesus and others more.

II. The three aspects of the mindset of Christ Jesus (5-11)

Paul could have stopped at verse 4 after giving them the three principles for their relational problems. But he goes on and touches man’s deepest part: the mind, precisely our mindset. Unless our inner person changes, no matter how hard we try, permanent unity in the body of Christ will not happen.

Let’s read verse 5. “**In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.**” Only when we have the mindset of Christ will beautiful relationships form. On the other hand, every relationship problem occurs because of a wrong and crooked mindset of one party or both parties.

Once I got mad at my wife. She asked me, “How was your day? What did you do today?” I said to her, “Why are you asking me what I did? Do you think I am so lazy that you have to check up on me?” Later she simply answered, “I just wanted to know how your day went!” Why did I interpret my wife’s lovely greeting so angrily? Was it because of my tiredness, stress or my brain tumor? No! It was simply because I had a wrong mindset: I let the mindset of a victim and sense of failure control me! When I had the mindset that my wife disrespected me, I was extremely defensive.

There can be many different kinds of mindsets. If you have the mindset of everyone-is-out-to-get me or I’m-better-than-you, the mindset of a you-must-listen-to-me parent or I-will-never-listen-to-you child, etc., every relationship will go wrong. In other words, if you have a mindset based on your past experiences, position, social status, age and gender, feelings and emotions, etc, apart from the mindset of Christ Jesus, such mindsets can cause all kinds of the relationship problems with others.

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When we have relationship problems, sometimes we withdraw or sometimes we confront or try in all kinds of ways to repair broken relationships by our human effort. But Apostle Paul says, **“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”** Unless we have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, our relation problems cannot be genuinely solved. Any methods other than “having the same mindset as Christ Jesus” is nothing but putting on a band-aid. In a deeper level, having our mind set on what Christ Jesus desires is the way to life and peace in every aspect of our lives (Ro 8:5-8).

How does Apostle Paul, describe Christ Jesus’ mindset? Look at verse 6. **“(Christ Jesus): Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.” This is the first aspect of the mindset of Christ Jesus: though being God, he did consider his equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.**

So what does this mean? Firstly, Jesus always had a correct understanding of himself. He is God. Before he became a man (pre-incarnation), and as he was born as a man (incarnation,) and throughout his life on earth, He knew he is in very nature God with the same attributes as God the Father. He had no identity confusion or crisis. But what amazes us, however, is that though being in very nature God, he didn’t consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. He did not say to God the Father, “I am God like you! I have equal say with you! My opinions are equally important than yours. You can’t tell me what to do! I have my own rights and freedom to enjoy!” Nor did he use his equality with God something to be used in order to lord it over people: He could have said to the sinful, “Listen to me, or I will send you all to hell or call down the lightning from heaven!” He did not use his miraculous powers or his wisdom as God for his own advantage, to get ahead, to manipulate, to feel superior. Rather, He had no sense of entitlement.

If Jesus, in very nature God, didn’t consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage, how much more we shouldn’t!

If I applied Apostle Paul’s words to myself, I would say, *“(I): who, in very nature a creature and human, do not consider equality with God or with others something to be used to my own advantage.”*

We sinful human beings tend to think that I am my own person; not am I equal to others but I think I am superior to others. We even think we know better

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than God. Therefore, we are inclined to think that our desires, interests and opinions are more important than others', or at least as equal to others' and God's. So then how can we have the first aspect of Jesus' mindset?

First, let's clarify. What is our identity? We are creatures and children of our Great Creator Savior God. This identity comes before our identity as sinful human beings or before our identity as Americans or Korean Americans or African Americans. Is it clear? We shouldn't have any identity confusion or crisis. So we must think of ourselves less from the world's perspective, but more from God's perspective.

Recently, I read the book *Knowledge of the Holy* written by A.W. Tozer. This book is all about God, his nature and attributes. As I meditated on God day and night, God grew bigger and greater and more awe-inspiring and overwhelming. I could not but praise God, "Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee. How great Thou art, how great Thou art!" I was overwhelmed with gratitude that I am a creature and child of such a great and awesome God. However, Satan lies that we can become like God without God or we can equal with God by disobeying him. However, the truth is that we can never become like God without God. It requires God for us to become humans, created in his image. So let's take pride and confidence in being "creatures" of such a great God. Meditate on God day and night until you can rejoice and are overwhelmed with your status of being creatures of such a great God.

Knowing our identity in relation to God affects our relationships with one another. I am secure in my identity. No matter how I or anyone sees me, what matters is how God sees me. I am also humbled to know that all I am and have received comes from God. And at the same time, each person is a precious child of our awesome Creator God. Therefore, when we consider myself and each person from God's point of view, rather than looking to use our God given abilities, talents, position, education, or our outer appearances for our own advantage, we can use them for God's good purpose, especially to serve others in the body of Christ and give glory to our Creator God. Thank God for those who offered their God-given talents to dance, play in the orchestra, sing, write a drama, act, be on the tech team, be a stage-hand, make props, design the banner and invitation card, be an usher, collect offering, deliver the message, bring their family and students, and pray fervently for three weeks so that God could be glorified!

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Apostle Paul describes the mindset of Christ more in verse 7. Let's read verse 7 together. **"Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness."** **The second aspect of the mindset of Christ Jesus is: he made himself nothing by taking the nature of a servant.** What does it mean that Jesus made himself nothing? It means that he took **the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.** Jesus, being in very nature God, took the nature of a servant, a slave who belonged to another. As a slave he had no rights, no privileges, no claim to himself. It is inconceivable that the Creator Eternal God willingly became a slave of God the Father and a slave of all.

Why did Jesus who is God become a slave of God the Father on earth? He did it because he looked to the interests of God, who loves and wants to save his lost creation. John 3:16-17 says, **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."** And the way he carried out God's rescue mission exactly as God desired and planned. John 5:19 says, **"Jesus gave them this answer: 'Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.'"** Through Jesus' submission to God, God's words became his words, and God's power became his power, and God's works became his works. Therefore, his disciples could see God's glory in Jesus (Jn 1:14).

Jesus became a servant of all men as well. Mark 10:45 says, **"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."** He did it for us, for our interests, not for his own. How did he serve? He healed all kinds of sick people who came to him from morning until night. He fed the crowds. He preached the good news everywhere he went. He taught the truth to the religious leaders who hated him. He loved and discipled his young disciples who were with him 24/7. On the night before his death, he washed his disciples' feet. As he hung on the cross, he ministered to one robber who is now with him in paradise. And most of all, he died as a servant in our places that we might be set free from slavery to Satan and become the children of God; he gave his life as our payment, as the ransom sacrifice in our place, so that we might not die under condemnation for our sins, but have eternal life in his name. What an amazing mindset Jesus had and lived by! And praise Jesus who took the nature of a servant!

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How can we have such a mindset as Christ Jesus? Again we must fight the right enemy, our self or ego. Our self is too strong for us to get rid of it by ourselves, by our willpower, and by meditation or Yoga. Therefore, God gave us the cross of Jesus Christ, which is his wisdom and his power. Apostle Paul said in Gal 2:20, **“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life now I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”** Our ego has to be crucified together with Christ by faith and we take the nature of a servant by putting Jesus as our new clothes by faith. And we need to pray to give our lives fully to God.

Jonathon Edwards, a great preacher and shepherd who helped to spark the first Great Awakening, on January 12, 1723 made this solemn dedication to God.

“I made a solemn dedication of myself to God, and wrote it down: giving up myself, and all that I had to God; to be for the future, in no respect, my own; to act as one that had no rights to himself, in any respect. And solemnly vowed, to take God for my whole portion and felicity; looking on nothing else, as any part of my happiness, nor acting as if it were.”

The fruit of this dedication transformed every sphere of American history, bringing forth a spiritual, political, and cultural transformation of passionate and whole-hearted devotion to God, transforming it into one nation under God. May God give us another great awakening as each one of us makes such a dedication to God and to serve others like Christ.

The third aspect of Jesus’ mindset is found in verse 8. Let’s read it together. **“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!”** **The third aspect is: Jesus’ mindset never changed even to the point of death.**

People change their minds when they feel they are not being treated fairly or equally. While they seek human approval and honor from others, but when they do not get what they want, or when the demands and sacrifices are too much, or when they don’t feel appreciated, they change their mindsets.

On the contrary, Jesus was faithful to death. He was a real man on earth surrounded by real sinful men and women. He was rejected by his own people from his birth to his cross. He was a man of sorrow and familiar with suffering. He

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was abandoned by his own disciples as he was arrested and tortured. Worst of all, he was forsaken by God the Father on the cross. However, he didn't change his mindset. Jesus had his mind set on what God desired to the point of death. He valued God's will more than his own life through his prayer on Garden of Gethsemane. He became obedient to death – even death on a cross. Why? Because Jesus knew that his death was the only way to bring reconciliation and peace between God and men, and men and men.

At this point, some of us may feel scared to obey these words and to have this mindset of Christ thinking, “If I make myself nothing, become a slave of God and others, and become obedient to death, won't I lose everything? Won't I be stepped on and abused by others, and the last of all, live and die in oblivion?” Let's see how God rewarded Jesus!

Look at verses 9-11. **“Therefore God 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 acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** Jesus promises in Matthew 23:11- 12, **“The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”**

Do you have the same mindset as Christ Jesus? In your relationships with others, do you have and practice the same mindset as Christ Jesus? Of course not, if we are honest. However, Listen! RSV translates the verse 5 as follows. **“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”** According to Apostle Paul, we already have Jesus' mindset since we are united with Him. Have what you already have! So the problem is we do not obey the mindset we have in Christ. We do not have the faith to claim this mindset that we have already had. We do not want to die to our self and ego. What should we do then? **Repent!** Personally, I repent that I have had the wrong mindset in relationships with my family members and members of the church. I ask the Lord and anyone who has been hurt by me to forgive me. May I live each day with the mindset of Christ that I have already received through my union with Christ, made possible only through Christ's humility, servanthship, death and resurrection.

Let us live by faith that we have his mindset truly in us. Let us choose to obey his mindset and let it manifest through our lives and in our relationships! In

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that way our inner person continues to change and we will become like Christ more and more. We will become one with others more and more. Christ Jesus' joy will be made complete in and among us. Our lives will bring abundant and overflowing life and healing and redemption to many. And our lives will bring glory to God! May this Christmas message from Apostle Paul take deep roots in our hearts and lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let's pray.