**Have the Same Mindset as Christ Jesus**

Php 2:5-11

Key verse 5 “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”

In Philippians 1:27a, Apostle Paul said, “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ Jesus.” He gave us a very practical way to live a gospel-centered life in 2:3-4 as follows, **“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.”** We tend to value those who love us, like our own children and friends, and possibly ‘my spouse.’ What about ‘others’ who don’t look lovable? I have harbored terrible grudges against my church leaders who I felt forced me to resign from my full-time staff position in UBF. A few days ago, while meditating on Jesus on the cross, I felt that as if he was speaking to me, “David! As I died on the cross for you, so I died for them. They are just as precious as you are.” Last Thursday, I could reconcile myself with one of them. Apostle Paul also said, “In humility value others above yourselves.” The gospel of Christ Jesus can enable us to value others above ourselves in humility. Do you want to learn more about humility?

In today’s passage, Apostle Paul shares with us the best example of true humility: Jesus’ humility, which is closely related to his mindset. He says, **“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”** Are you suffering in any of your relationships in your family or in the church? If so, Paul’s message is for me and you. In this message, I will highlight five aspects of the mindset of Christ Jesus.

As a starter, let’s see what was happening in the Philippian Church. In chapter 4:2, Paul said, **“I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.”** His pleads to indicate that there was a very serious relationship problem.

Now with this conflict in our minds, let’s read verse 5. **“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”**  Here Apostle Paul teaches us that in our relationships with one another, we need to start from the right place: mindset. In other versions, the word “mindset” is translated as “mind” “attitude” or “heart.” Our mindset is our deepest part, the center of our being. According to Apostle Paul, it is only when each of us has the same mindset as Christ Jesus that we can have right and good relationships with others. On the other hand, a wrong and crooked mindset of one party or both parties will cause relationship problems.

Once I got mad at my wife.  Upon coming home from her work, 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?” Why did I interpret my wife’s lovely greeting so angrily? Was it because of my tiredness, stress or my remaining 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 feelings and emotions, prejudices and assumptions, past experiences and age, social status and position, gender and race, etc., such mindsets can cause all kinds of relationship problems with others.

When we have relationship problems, sometimes we withdraw or sometimes we confront or try to repair broken relationships with our human efforts in all kinds of ways. 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 relationship problems cannot be genuinely resolved. Any methods other than “having the same mindset as Christ Jesus” is nothing but putting on a band-aide.

How does Apostle Paul then describe Christ’s 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.”**In this verse, we can learn about the first two aspects of the mindset of Christ Jesus.

Firstly, Jesus always had a correct understanding of himself. Before he became a man, and as he was born and lived on earth as a man, Jesus knew he is in very nature God with the same attributes and essence as God the Father. He had no identity confusion or crisis.

What amazes us, however, is that though being in very nature God, Jesus the Son didn’t consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. This is the second aspect of his mindset. Jesus the Son 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 to exercise and freedom to enjoy!” Instead, Jesus Christ didn’t consider his equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Nor did he use his authority and power as God in order to lord it over people either. He could have said to sinners, “Listen to me, or I will send you all to hell!” He did not use his miraculous powers or his wisdom as God for his own advantage, to get ahead, to manipulate, and to feel superior. He had no sense of entitlement. If Jesus, in very nature God, lived on earth such a selfless life, how much more we should!

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 tend to value our rights, equality, justice and fairness. We also tend to think that I am my own person; not am I equal to others but I think I am superior to others. 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. Thus, we live and plan our life as if we know better than God.

So then how can we have the first and second aspect of Jesus’ mindset? First and foremost, 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.

Knowing our identity in relation to God affects our relationships with others. When you are secure in your identity in God, however others see you doesn’t matter. What truly matters is how God sees you. If you see others from God’s perspective as well, in spite of their weaknesses and flaws and sins, they are precious creations and children of our awesome Creator God. Though each person is different in God-given abilities, talents, position, education, or outer appearances, we do not look down upon others or envy them. Instead, we can use what we have received from God for his good purpose, especially to serve and build up others in the body of Christ. May God bless you and me to have an absolute sense of identity in God and not to claim our equality with others for our own advantage.

Let’s read verse 7 together. **“Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.”**  This is the third aspect of the mindset of Christ Jesus. What does it mean that Jesus made himself nothing? The other versions translate it as “he ‘emptied himself.’” In other words, he poured out something out of himself as if a person pours out water from a bucket and make it empty. Many theologians have debated on this verse. Some said that he gave up one of his attributes as God like omnipresence. If so, he did not come on earth as perfect God. Such confusions can be resolved when we consider the phrase from the immediate literal context. In verse 6, Paul said that Jesus didn’t consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Though Jesus is equal to God, which means he has his own right as God the Son, he didn’t use his rights to his own advantage. When he made himself nothing, he intentionally gave up the right to his rights. That was not all. The verse 7b states that **Jesus took the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.**Jesus, though being in very nature God, took the nature of a servant in human likeness, a slave who belonged to another. As a slave, he chose not to exercise his rights, privileges, and claims to himself. It is inconceivable that Jesus, the Son of God willingly became a slave of God the Father and a slave of all. Jesus emptied himself by giving up the right to his rights and filled himself with the nature of a servant.

Why did Jesus the Son do so? He did it because in humility and out of his love, he looked to the interests of God, who loves and wants to save his lost creation. John 3:16 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.”**  Jesus 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 will became his own. God’s words became his words, and God’s power became his power. Jesus was the exact image of invisible God. Therefore, his disciples could see God and his 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. 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. 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. What an amazing mindset Jesus had and lived by! And praise Jesus who emptied himself and took the nature of a servant and served sinners like us!

How can we have such a mindset as Christ Jesus?  Again, we must fight the right enemy, our self or ego, who claims our own rights, interests, privileges, etc.  Our old self is too strong for us to get rid of it by ourselves, by our willpower, and by meditation or Yoga. Therefore, God has given us the cross of Jesus Christ, which is his wisdom and his power. We crucify our old ego proclaiming the gospel of Jesus to ourselves saying, “I was dead to myself, but I am made alive to Christ. I am a new creation in Christ.” And we take the nature of a servant putting our lives in Jesus’ disposal as salves to Him and His people. May God bless you to have a mindset that empties yourself and takes the very nature of a servant

Now let’s read verse 8. **“And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!”**The fourth aspect is: Jesus’ mindset never changed.

People change their minds when they feel they are not being treated fairly or equally. While they seek 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 didn’t change his mindset. He was rejected by his own people whom he came to save. He 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. Why? Because Jesus knew that his death and resurrection 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 have this mindset of Christ and obey God, 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, die in oblivion?”

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.”**   The fifth aspect of Jesus’ mindset is that he expected God’s reward, God’s exaltation, not man’s. Jesus promised 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.”**

In our relationships with others, do we have the same mindset as Christ Jesus? No? or Yes? Of course not, if we are honest. However, that is not biblically true. The RSV translates the verse 5 as follows, **“Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”** According to Apostle Paul, Jesus’ mind is already ours. How? It is because we are united with Him by faith and we do have his mindset as well. Through Jesus’ cross didn’t we die to our old self and ego; our old mindset, and through his resurrection, haven’t we been raised to life with new self, and with new mindset, which is Jesus’ mindset? Apostle Paul urges us to have what you already have! So, the problem is that we do not obey the mindset of Christ that we do have. We keep going back to our sinful old ego, our old mindset. Such a bad habit should be repented of. Perhaps some of you may be waiting until you feel like having the mindset of Jesus. No! You don’t need to. Listen! God has put you in all kinds of relationships in the church and in your family where you can exercise Jesus’ mindset. Humbly obey Jesus’ mindset and take proper actions.

Let us believe that we have Jesus’ mindset truly in us. Let us choose to obey his mindset and let it manifest in our relationships with God and others! In this way, our inner persons continue to change and grow like Christ more and more. We who have Jesus’ mindset become like-minded with others more and more. Just as our Triune God; three persons in God have the one and same mind and in perfect unity, so can we, the church of Christ can be like-minded. In this way, the church will reflect the very image of God in this world and bring glory to God! May this message of Paul take deep roots in our hearts and lives, especially in all of our relationships in the church and in our families.