

## “Let us have the mind of Jesus!” Phi 2:5-11

**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 emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 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.**

Writing to Christians in Philippi Paul had the same concerns as we often do... what does this mean to be a Christian? How to live a life worthy of a Christian?

Christians in Philippi had got it wrong and Paul used this letter to correct them. We also often get it wrong, too often, and therefore we could use what Paul is teaching as well. In this letter Paul gives the answer to these questions.

And his answer is rather simple – have the mind of Jesus. What does this mean, we may wonder? And to understand what Paul means by it we need to get right our understanding about God.

If we have got our understanding about God right, we will much more likely will know how to lead a life worthy of a Christian and will much more likely lead such lives. Let's therefore try to get our understanding about God right.

How do people often think about God? And, unfortunately, this is how many Christians think about God as well. We create God according our image and likeness. So, we think about God from human analogies as a benevolent ruler.

As a good king, just stronger and more powerful, of course. What does this mean? If He is our king, our ruler, what does He expect from us? He wants us to honour Him and to pay Him respect and He wants us to obey Him and do what He desires, so that He would receive from us what is due to Him.

And then we as loyal subjects try to please Him, and pay respect to Him, and honour Him. We try to give Him what is due to Him. And He, in His turn, being a benevolent ruler then cares about His loyal subjects.

Does it make sense? I think so. Because this is how good rulers rule. In this situation, how would we understand our worship? Then we'd understand it as giving praise and honour to our divine king. For it is due to Him.

How then we'd understand our obedience to Him? As our way of pleasing Him to earn His favour so that we can enjoy His care and as loyal subjects receive from Him what we desire.

And if this is what our God is like, then what does this mean for us as His subjects? If we are to give what is due to our King, then we are to expect others to give us what is due to us, right?

In fact, we are quite concerned about others giving us what is due to us. Aren't we? Be it respect, or proper attitude, or justice, or service, or obedience, and so on. And we are quite sensitive when we don't get these things.

For if we do these things for our God, then others should do the same things for us. And then, if others are good towards us, and give to us what is due to us, then we may return the favour and care for them.

Does it make sense? Does it seem just and fair? It does indeed, if we create God according our image and likeness. And if this is our picture of God then we can lead comfortable and self-satisfied and self-righteous lives.

We can attend the church and be good people and expect from both God and people what is due to us, what we rightly deserve. And it makes sense. Except that is it a miserable caricature of what it means to be a Christian.

Perhaps too many Christians think about God this way and think about what it means to be a Christian this way. Therefore, even among Christians we have things happening just like Paul mentions in his letter, – selfish ambition and conceit, where we are mostly concerned to get what we think we deserve and what we think is due to us.

And it leads to more demands, rivalry, ambitions, gossips, arguments. And then how a congregation like that is different from the world around us, – with all the concerns about self, about what I want, what I deserve, what my rights are.

Now, let us get our understanding about God right. If He is not like a benevolent ruler whom we just described, then what is He like? Let's put it this way, the God of the Bible, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is not concerned about getting from you what is due to Him.

He is not concerned about getting at all, He is concerned about – giving. He is giving God, generous God who gives and gives and gives. Unceasingly. He is not concerned what He can get from you, but about what He can give to you.

From the very beginning we see our God as giving and generous God. The whole act of creation is God's act of giving. He didn't need it, we did. And His creative activity never ceases.

Even today, as Luther quotes psalmist in the Small Catechism: "The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season. You open your hand; you satisfy the desire of every living thing." (Ps 145:15-16)

This generous God indeed cares for everyone. As Jesus said: "Your Father who is in heaven makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." (Mat 5:45) He gives and provides for everyone.

But the best way to see God's radical generosity and His selfless and giving nature is in Jesus. This is what Paul refers to. He portrays before the eyes of his listeners the picture of God as it is revealed to us in Jesus.

“Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

This God doesn't make sense. Jesus Christ, true God from eternity didn't use His divine power to make us, to force us to do and give what is due to Him. Instead ... He emptied Himself, He left His divine glory to be born as one of us.

This doesn't make sense. Why would He do that? And He did even more, “he humbled himself to the point of death, even death on a cross.” We crucify and mock Him – He prays for us. We are rebels and His enemies, He dies for us.

How is this possible? And Paul explains, – because Jesus considers you as more important than Him. He knew that the only power that is greater than the power of our sin and selfishness is the power of His love.

He knew that only experiencing His love we would be freed from our slavery to sin and death and able to respond by loving Him more than ourselves. He knew it would take His death to reveal this love and He was willing to pay the price.

In Jesus Christ, the Holy God reveals what kind of God He is. He uses everything for your sake. He is ready to leave His divine glory to serve you. He is ready to give up His life, to die, to die on the cross, so that only He could give you what you truly need, – freedom to love Him and eternal life.

How could He leave everything that He had for our sake? Because He loves you and cares for you and is ready to do whatever it takes to give you the greatest of His gift, eternal life together with Him.

This is how true God reveals Himself to us and this is how Paul summarizes it so well. And if this is what true God is like, then it changes everything. Then our worship is not anymore about what we do for God.

Instead, it is about what He does for you, as He humbly comes to be among us and to bless us, to pour over you His abundant gifts. Then our obedience to this God is not about pleasing Him so that we could expect His favours in return.

Instead, it is about conforming our minds to mind of Jesus and trying to live giving lives, where we are much more concerned about others than we are about ourselves, looking for the good for others, and not only for ourselves.

If we as Christians keep still looking for ‘what I want’ and ‘what is due to me’, we haven't got the right picture of God, and we haven't got the right idea of what it means to be a Christian, we haven't experienced Jesus love yet.

Then we need to pray the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds so that we could see and understand and experience what our God is like, what He has done and does for us, and be transformed by His love to have the mind of Jesus.

Because when you do experience Jesus' love, when the Holy Spirit pours over you His joy and the Father hugs you, ungrateful and rebellious sinner, nothing remains as it was. You are changed, and you want to respond to God's love.

Then you are not anymore concerned about getting. For you have received from Jesus so abundantly that this abundance flows over and you simply can't contain it.

You need to share it, you need to give, you need to serve, you need to love. And the more you do the more Jesus refills you with all His blessings. It is a joyful, joyful life.

Remember, people streamed to Jesus. Hundreds and thousands of them. Why? For He cared for them and gave Himself to them. They felt the difference. They realize that He was different. Instead of demanding and getting, He was giving, He was serving, He was loving.

I pray that we all with the help of the Holy Spirit would have the mind of Jesus, so that the people of Barossa could look at you and say: "O these Christians, they really consider others more important than themselves and they really care about others more than they care about themselves."

How much joy would it give to our Lord and to all His heavenly hosts, and how wonderful a testimony would it be about the power of Jesus' love to all people, and how much joy it would give to you. Let's have the mind of Jesus.

The peace of God who surpasses all our understanding, keep your minds and hearts in Jesus Christ. Amen.