

TRINITY 16 (Year A) 2020 – Matthew 21:23-32; **Philippians 2:1-13 Part 2 – ‘Mind of Christ’**

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Do you know somebody so well that you can finish off a sentence they have started?

Or know them so well that you can answer on their behalf and know it's what they would have said? A bit like on the game show *Mr and Mrs*.

Do you indeed know someone so well that you can correctly predict their reaction to any situation?

So now for confession time! Unfortunately on Saturday I drove into the back of someone's vehicle! I wasn't travelling very fast and thankfully no-one was hurt, although my car now needs some repair work! But after it happened, the other driver got out of his van, announced with some surprise in his voice: "you drove into me"... and then calmly checked the damage, and said "oh well, not to worry, it's only a car". Now this reaction may surprise some who are listening, but it didn't actually surprise me! Because the other driver was in fact my husband! And, this is just the sort of calm and compassionate response I am used to seeing in him...

So, what has this introduction got to do with today's reading?

Well, in his letter to the Christians in Philippi, Paul is encouraging them to be "of one mind" – and to 'let that mind be the same as the mind that was in Christ Jesus'.....

In other words, Paul is urging them to know Jesus so well that their minds will think the same as Jesus's mind in any situation.... So that they can react in the way they know Jesus would react..... And do what they know Jesus would do.....

Which as Paul reminds them, means acting in love, in humility, with compassion, and putting the interest of others before themselves something which is exemplified in verses 6-11; in this description of Jesus, who though being and having the power of the Son of God, did something remarkable with that power

- becoming human, and living a life that was humble and selfless, and that served others - even to giving up His life on the cross.

So, how can we get to the point where we have the mind of Christ?

Where we are able to think like Him and act like Him?

Well thankfully, as Paul reminds the Philippians, we have the help of God's Holy Spirit. God will always answer the prayer that asks for His help to do the right thing, and His Spirit will help us to do that..... but of course it's always up to us whether we listen and obey!

I would also like to suggest though another couple of things today that may help us 'to have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus'.

Firstly, it is to actually *think about what we're thinking about!* Because our minds *and our thoughts* are a spiritual **battleground!**

I know I am not always happy or proud of what I'm thinking, and at those times I know my thoughts are definitely not in line with Jesus's thinking.....

If we *think about what we're thinking about* we will also realise that our thoughts effect our attitudes, our moods, and our actions. If I'm thinking bad thoughts it's going to put me in a bad mood! Which is why Paul encourages the Philippians later in this letter (4:8) to think about good things..... He says to them: "whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

Similarly in his letter to the Colossians (3:2) Paul tells them: "to set their minds (and keep them set) on what is above" – that is on heavenly things, things that are pure and of God. Because God is love. And He wants us to think with minds that come from a place of love – which involves forgiveness and grace.

With this in mind I would encourage us, myself included, to always think the best of everyone – because Jesus does..... Indeed He, who knows us better than anyone else, thinks we were worth dying for.....!

My second and last suggestion is pretty obvious. And that is to just encourage us to get to know Jesus better!

The reason I was not surprised at my husband's response to my little accident on Saturday, is because I know him..... I have spent the last 35 years with him, watching him, listening to him, seeing how he reacts to things.

If we are to think like Jesus, we have to get to know Him – and therefore give ourselves time with Him - reading about Him, praying to Him, just being still in His presence, and letting His love fill us.....

We are told that *'we can do anything if we set our minds to it'*

Today I would suggest something better. That: *'if we set our minds on the mind of Jesus Christ we can change the world!'*

Because Jesus's thinking will effect our actions – and Jesus's mind is set on love and peace and grace, and that topsy turvy way He has of exemplifying power by serving others.

And so I conclude with a prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, with the help of Your Holy Spirit, draw us closer to You today, so that we may get to know You so well that our thoughts and consequently our actions will reflect Your humble, selfless, compassionate and loving ways.

AMEN