

9 April 2017
Palmarum / Passion Sunday

St. Athanasius Lutheran Church
Vienna, VA

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“The Mind of Christ”

Text: Philippians 2:5-11; Isaiah 50:4-9a; John 12:12-19

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have this mind among yourselves, St. Paul said. What mind is that? A mind of humility, lowliness, obedience, service, self-sacrifice, love, mercy, compassion, prayer, truth. That is the mind of Christ.

What mind do we have? If you're like me, not that one! Oh, sometimes, yes. But often times, no. It's a struggle, isn't it? To think of ourselves rightly and not more highly than we ought. To have this mind of thinking of others more than ourselves.

Because the sin that we are born with has curved us in on ourselves and makes us think of ourselves first. That is what comes naturally to us. And that's why Jesus is so different. He who was born without sin does not think as we think, nor do as we do. He does as we will hear again today in the reading of the Passion: *lay down His life for the life of the world*. He will lay down His sinless life to save a sinful world.

Why does the world not welcome such a Saviour? You think we would. He has come for our good. The sin that has curved us in on ourselves has done this, too. We contend against the very one who has come to save us. Vying for control, for supremacy, for right.

We'll hear that today. Pilate, the Chief Priests, the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Scribes and Elders and the whole Jewish Council, all lined up to contend with Jesus. And they thought they won. The nails and spear and tomb proved they won. Jesus talked big, but His life ended with a whimper - or so they thought. These proud ones thought not that Jesus ***made Himself nothing***, but that they made Him nothing. It was their doing.

But no. They were but tools in the hands of God. Just the same as a pastor who is a tool in the hands of God to baptize, to preach, to absolve, and to feed. I cannot do any of those things on my own. But God can. And does. And those Roman and Jewish leaders could not make Jesus nothing, try as they might. Only Jesus could make Himself nothing. And Paul says He did. For you. He was God, but did not count this as something to be grasped, to be held onto, to be exalted, as we would - but made Himself nothing. A nothing for the nothings, that you can have everything. That's what Jesus did for you.

Have this mind among yourselves, St. Paul said. Yeah, right!

But then he added more: ***which is yours in Christ Jesus***. By nature, by birth, we do not have such a mind. But by re-birth we do! Born again in the waters of Holy Baptism and given the Spirit of God, we do now have this mind - the mind of Christ. A gift given to us. That our old sin-plagued, wrong-thinking minds begin to think right again. And that our old sin-infected, wrong-doing lives begin to live right again. That we not vie for control, supremacy, or right, but ***bow our knees*** and ***confess with our tongues*** that not we, but ***Jesus Christ is Lord***.

And when we do that, we do so side-by-side with Jesus. *For He did it first*. Bowing His knees in compassion, stooping to be with the poor and low. And then bowing His head in death. And both in faith in His Father. And He was vindicated. He was exalted. *And still is*.

Yet even exalted, still He has the same mind, *of service*; to serve us. And so with the crowds that welcomed Him into Jerusalem that day, we too cry out ***Hosanna!*** which means, *save us now!* And He is. Saving us by baptizing, preaching, absolving, and feeding. Giving Himself and His Spirit to us, that we be forgiven our sin, re-born to a new life, and have the mind of Christ. To give ourselves for others as Christ gave Himself for us.

And so the words of Christ we heard from the prophet Isaiah this morning are true for us. ***He sustains us who are weary with His Word***. Weary of the sin in us, weary of the sin in the world, weary of the struggle - Jesus knows, and sustains us. *When we are weak, He is strong* (1 Corinthians 12:10).

Morning by morning He does this, Isaiah says. Every day.

When we are rebellious He forgives us. When we are persecuted He helps us. When our determination wanes, His never does.

And when others contend against us, they are contending against Him. *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting ME* (Acts 9:4)? He stands by us.

And though we will wear out like a garment, we will be raised again, where *no rust or moth destroy* (Matthew 6:19-21). Immortal and incorruptible. In Him.

That's what this story we will hear again now is all about. Listen for all of this. This is what you'll hear from Jesus, and see in Him. And through His Word and Spirit, as you hear, He will work this in you. His mind. To conform you to be like Him. To work in you all that is pleasing to Him. That you, now, be His tool for others, for good. And ***having this mind among yourselves***.

In the Name of the Father, and of the (+) Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.