

The Rev. Emily Dunevant

April 13, 2019

Community Prayer Service

Philippians 2:5-11

I don't know what it means to have the mind of Christ. I have always been curious about what Paul meant when he wrote the words, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." If that's true, then I am in need of serious remediation. Remediation from doubt. Remediation from harsh words. Remediation from judgement and fear and guilt and shame.

It's such a lofty goal to have the mind of Christ and really...it's not just lofty, it's unattainable. And yet, somewhere in the midst of my need for remediation and my honest to goodness, whole hearted attempt to be like Christ there are some fairly mediocre successes. And, I'm pretty proud of those moments. The moments when I remember to not judge someone but to simply love them. The moments I remember to not beat myself up for a decision I made but look for the good that may have come from it. The moments I remember to pray instead of worry myself into a stupor. They aren't grand moments but they feel like I am getting something right.

Here's the thing...if you read this text and think it is a singular effort...you against the world, your individual effort to obtain a mind like Christ on your own accord...you would be wrong. That's not to say that we aren't supposed to work hard at it as individuals...we are, but this verse isn't about our individual effort alone.

Let's look at the first sentence again. "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." Here's a very important, but often overlooked consideration...When we use the word "you" in English...is it plural or is it singular? Well, it depends. Typically, we can discern the usage of "you" based upon the sentence or the speaker or the context.

But, when we translate from Greek, sometimes the context doesn't translate as clearly and the well-meaning folks who translated the original texts for us don't always give us the appropriate clues. And in our best efforts, we read the texts and interpret them to the best of our ability. Thus, I have always read this verse to mean that *I* am to get *my* mind to be as much like Christ as possible. And then I keep failing and that doesn't feel so good.

However, Paul was not writing to just one individual but to a group of people. When he wrote "you" in the original Greek, he used the plural form of the word. He was telling a group of people to work together to be like Christ. To hold one another up. To support one another. As in, "Let the same mind be in ya'll that was in Christ Jesus. (That's the southern version). The New International Translation of the bible states it this way, "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. The New American Standard version states it another way, "Have this attitude in *yourselves* which was also in Christ Jesus."

This is a community implication. We were never meant to travel this journey alone. Nor were we meant to get it all right. But together, we can do so much more when we lift one another up in the body of Christ.

So when I find myself full of doubt or fear (things I know aren't like the mind of Christ) I can turn to my faith community to help me through. When I see a friend struggling with anger or shame, I can help her find comfort in Christ. When we are making poor choices we can turn to our church to pray for us.

I hope you know that kind of comfort, that kind of healing, that kind of love that comes when we work together to have a mind like Christ.

Amen.