

The Mindset of CHRISTians

Have you ever wanted to get inside of someone else's head? To see things from their point of view? To know the thoughts that go through their head? Sometimes I can't help but wish that life was more like a movie or TV show, so that I could see things from everyone's perspective. I wish I could get into Jesus' head and see what his thoughts and emotions were throughout his ministry. What was he thinking when he got the news that his good friend, John the Baptist, had been beheaded? What about when he was rejected by his own home town? What was going through his head as he rode into Jerusalem, knowing full well the pain and suffering and death that awaited him there? Jesus entire ministry was full of rejection and pain and suffering. But throughout all of that, he kept an attitude of humility and service to the will of his Father in heaven. The mindset of Christ showed itself in an eagerness to serve, and by giving all the glory to God. That is the mindset we as Christians want to adopt as well.

In our sermon reading for today, Paul urges his readers to have the same mindset as their Savior Jesus, **“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing.” (vs. 6-7a)** Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the master and creator of all things, the one who rules over the earth from heaven made himself nothing. He set aside the power and authority that he held as God, and instead humbled himself to be born of a virgin, in a dirty, dingy barn. His birth was in the humblest of circumstances. The creator of everything we see around us instead became a creature. The master of all became the servant.

This power wasn't taken from him. No, he willingly set it aside and humbled himself. This setting aside of his power was kind of like if you would play a basketball game with a young child. You know full well that you could beat them with your eyes closed and both hands tied behind your back. But you don't do that. Even though you could dunk the ball on them or knock the ball out of the air every time they try to shoot it, instead you hold back. In a way, you are also setting aside your “power” to play the game, if only to pick it back up again when you play with someone who is a little older and more skilled.

When we see this humility of Christ, this willingness to set aside the glory and honor he is due, isn't that amazing? He had everything, but for us he became nothing. And yet, we often forget about Christ's humble attitude, and about having that mindset in our lives as well.

We live in a “me first” culture. Everywhere you look, you're encouraged to take advantage of whatever situation you are in for your own personal benefit. Don't think about what the consequences are for anyone else. You just need to do whatever is best for you, and if that means hurting someone else, so be it. You've got to crack a couple of eggs if you want to make an omelet, right?

Instead of asking ourselves “What can I do for others?” we think only of ourselves. “What can you do for me? Forget about what you need. I'm more important!” Our sinful pride wants us to think that we've lost if we help another person without them ever asking for it. And if there's nothing for me in return? “Ha, forget about it. Let me know when you're ready to make it worth my while.”

We act so haughty, so high and mighty, like we deserve all the best simply because we exist. And yet, God in his Word makes it pretty clear to us that the only thing we do deserve is death. **“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.” (Prov. 14:12) “For the wages of sin is death.” (Rom. 6:23)** We have no right to be prideful. If anything, Jesus was the only one who ever truly had the right to be proud of his life and his actions. Instead, **“he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross.” (vs. 7-8)**

Our powerful, amazing, awesome God set aside his power to become a servant. He gave up all the comforts that heaven offered him, where he had angels and saints singing his praises, where he ruled with the Father and the Spirit over all, and he gave up all of that to become a human?! That doesn't make any sense. That would be like Superman deciding to be a normal human being. It's completely backwards! Why would Jesus do that for us? We wouldn't do the same. By our very nature, we hate God, and want nothing to do with him. We deserve only death. We should be the ones serving Christ, not the other way around!

But even with all of our sinful pride and failings, Christ still loves us. In fact, he loves us so much that he was willing to endure the most humbling and painful punishment, all for our sins! Crucifixion was a punishment saved almost exclusively for slaves, foreigners and criminals. It was an incredibly humiliating way to die. But in this humiliating death, Christ demonstrated his own immense love for us. He was mocked his entire ministry, rejected by his own disciples, beaten, whipped and finally executed for false charges. Even though he knew exactly what he was getting into, he still gladly offered his life in the humblest manner. All of that, just because he loves us.

Can you imagine that? Can you imagine living your entire life without a single thought for your own well-being or gain? It seems totally impossible! And yet, Jesus did that. For you, and for me. He came not to be served, but to serve. His humble life of service, which culminated with his death on the cross, displays the awesome glory of our God.

How are we able to give glory to God with the same attitude that Christ displayed in the cross, “**who... did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage?**” (vs. 6) Christ was, is and always will be God, and that includes the time he spent on earth as well. He could have used that to his own advantage. Being true God, he had the power to do whatever he wanted, whenever he wanted. He could have opted out of the suffering that he knew was coming, but he did not. Christ made no excuses. He never whined or complained about the intense suffering that he knew was coming.

In fact, because he was God, he also understood just how uniquely qualified he was for the plan of our salvation. Only he could do what was required to save mankind from their sin. Only he could have undergone all that pain and suffering without a single selfish thought.

We are also uniquely qualified, but for a different calling than Christ's. His sacrifice has justified us, made things right, between us and God. His blood has washed us clean of all our sin. We have been given a special privilege. We have an amazing message about Jesus that we can share with everyone. The message of his humble life and death on the cross. Like Christ, our attitude is not to do everything we can to get out of what we have been called to do.

We can give Christ the praise that he is due, for he now reigns in heaven with the Father in a position of power and authority. “**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.**” (vs. 9-11) Jesus' goal, his mindset, was never for his own personal gain. And yet, because of his humble service, God exalted Jesus “**to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.**”

The name that is above every name. Such a prestigious sounding title. The name that every person should know and love and worship and adore, that name is Jesus! Jesus saved us from our sins, and for that we should give him glory. But even his name means Savior. The name “Jesus” comes from the Hebrew verb *yasha* which means to “save” or “deliver” someone from their troubles. “Savior.” That's the name the angel gave him. And it's such a fitting name!

Jesus was given the name “Savior” that “**at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.**” So his name is so powerful that anyone who hears it has to kneel? I've been saying the name Jesus for this whole sermon, and no one here is kneeling! Kneeling shows respect. God elevated Christ and gave him this name that everything would give him respect and honor. Paul says every

knee, even those in heaven and earth. The angels in heaven glorify Christ as their God and Lord. Even the devil and his demons have to acknowledge Christ as their Lord and master.

However, notice the end of verse eleven. The mindset of Christ was not to exalt himself. He didn't do all of these humble acts so that in the end he was exalted. This was always about our salvation. He thought only of others, not himself. Christ did this for God's glory, and for that he was exalted.

We also want to strive to have this mindset as Christians. We don't do these acts of service so that in the end we just look good. We don't help another out so that everyone in the church knows our name! It's all done to glorify God! He's the one who saved us. He's the one who changed our hearts when we hated him so much in our unbelief. He is the one who loved us so much, that he sent his Son to save us. Our mindset should be one of humility. God did all of that for me!

How can we show this humble love towards others? Imagine with me for a moment. You're on your daily walk around the block, and as you round the corner and get closer to your own home, you notice your next door neighbor struggling to juggle multiple bags of food while also trying to dig their keys out of their pocket. A bag slips and falls out of their hand, food goes flying everywhere. Your sinful nature wants you to think about all the times they've critiqued your garden in the back, or how the lines from your lawn mower weren't quite straight. You could just keep on walking and let them suffer in humiliation, as yet another jar of spaghetti sauce rolls down the driveway into the street. Wouldn't that make your day just a little better, watching them suffer, while feeling better about yourself?

But what if, instead you follow Christ's example? Instead of ignoring the situation, you go up, and help them with their groceries. Maybe, when you go inside to help them unpack, they mention how much they've been struggling to cope with the loss of a loved one, and you're able to share the message that gives you so much comfort when you are hurting as well. The next you know, a year has passed, and they're confessing their faith in front of the congregation.

Do you see the point here? Giving glory to God with an attitude of humility does not have to be something as earth-shaking and world-altering as Christ's death on the cross. Through something as simple as offering a helping hand, we can give God glory by having the same mindset of humility that Christ showed in his life.

When you think about it, we don't really need to see inside Jesus' head to know how he felt about us. Christ's humble attitude and love for us is clearly demonstrated in his words and actions. Even though he may have felt the dread and foreboding of his coming death, he rode into Jerusalem to face his coming suffering. His love poured out in his words on the cross, showing grace and mercy to even the most hardened criminals. All of the pain and suffering and humiliation served a purpose. It was you that Jesus had in his mind as he endured all of it. It was you that he had his mind set on to save! As we see the mindset of Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem, we can't help but set our mind on the things he had as well. As St. Paul wrote in verse five, **"Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus,"** eager to serve others, giving all the glory to God. Amen.