

April 13, 2025

Palm Sunday

The Rev. Amanda Gerken-Nelson

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus”

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” Paul wrote in his letter to the Philippians

He then goes on to include what many think was an existing hymn about Jesus called the “Christ Song” or what some even call the “Servant Song” because of the text of the first two stanzas:

*Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness.*

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus

Along with the song Paul includes which gives us a sense of what that mindset was or is, the passion reading from this morning gives us a few insights into the mindsets of Jesus, too

- the prayerful Jesus who goes to the garden to pray to God
- the frustrated Jesus who, in the same garden, gets annoyed with his friends who can't seem to stay awake
- the deserted and incarcerated Jesus
- the persecuted Jesus
- the beaten and humiliated Jesus
- the crucified Jesus

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus

*who...being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross.*

And we journey this week to the morning that we know changes everything about this story and we wait with great anticipation to tell it, but there is a resurrection mindset, too

for... *God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name*

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus

It would be easy to interpret Paul's encouragement as an invitation to take on the mindset of servanthood

As disciples of Christ, we are to humble ourselves – regardless of our standing and privilege – and take on the form of servant, like Jesus

And, I do think that is part of what Paul is encouraging the Church to do

But, what does that look like?

Ultimately, and gratefully, Jesus was a very complex person, the passion narrative this morning captures so much of the nuance of Jesus the “servant” – taking on his mind or his likeness sounds like quite a complex and nuanced invitation

You can probably guess, that I like this complexity and nuance because I appreciate so greatly the humanness of Jesus and how it validates and comforts my humanness

If taking on the mind of Jesus is taking on the mind of Jesus in the passion narrative, then me, and you, and so many others have so many more entry points to connect with Jesus' mind than if we think of Jesus in only in one way, as a servant

And, lest we think that being of the same mind as Jesus means that we all interpret that exactly the same way and all of a sudden all of us are walking out the door on Sunday morning having exactly the same thoughts and perspectives, Frank Crouch, Retired Dean and Professor of New Testament at Moravian Theological Seminary in PA says we're taking that a bit too literally

“When Paul tells the Philippians to be of the same mind,” Dr. Crouch writes, “he is not saying that everyone should think the same thoughts, have the same ideas, or be mental clones of one another. He’s telling them to have the same motivations, to draw from the same animating life force. He doesn’t necessarily want them all to have identical thoughts and beliefs. He wants them to embody and be guided by the kind of decision-making that leads one into the ways of Jesus, opens one up to God’s life-giving power that permeates all of creation.”

This can be a helpful reminder these days, as we journey in vulnerability the path to the cross, and as we traverse the streets and sidewalks of our communities in our current socio-political climate

Paul is not calling us to be “mental clones” of each other, as Dr. Crouch puts it, but Paul is calling us to consider our motivations and be guided by the ways of Jesus

There is not a universal mind of Jesus, per se, but there is a universal calling for us Jesus followers

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus

Perhaps it would be meaningful to you, as I sense it will be meaningful to me, to ponder that mind this week, this holiest of weeks in our Christian tradition

This week when we hear the stories of Jesus’ last weeks, days, moments, and his last breaths

As can often happen, I thought I knew the mind of Jesus when I read the text from Paul's letter again earlier this week - "I know what Paul means"

But as so often happens, as I've mulled over what to say this morning, it has been Paul's invitation that has come back to me time and again, and that interpretation of Paul's invitation that I was so sure I knew has become more "vanity" as Ecclesiastes puts it - mist, vapor, un-grasp-able – and it has become the most life-giving for me to ponder

I invite you into the pondering this week, into the discernment

Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, my friends.

Amen.