



Sermon, August 16, 2020  
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Junction City United Methodist Church

Sermon Series: Reboot! JP21

## “Having the Bigger Mind of Christ”

### Scripture: (Philippians 2:1-15) NRSV

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God,

did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,

<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,

taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form,

<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself

and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him

and gave him the name  
that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus

every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess

that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>13</sup> for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

<sup>14</sup> Do all things without murmuring and arguing, <sup>15</sup> so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world.

## **Recapping – How I Got Here**

Back in 1972, I rolled up my sleeping bag, packed some clothes into a small suitcase, grabbed a pillow, and rode in the car as my dad drove me far up into the mountains of the Sawtooth range in Idaho. He dropped me off at a rustic United Methodist Camp. Along with twelve other high schoolers. I went up with a mind in turmoil, filled with conflicting and contradictory feelings, a certain amount of anger, and a bit of emptiness and lostness. I have shared about this experience before. Something happened up at that camp that took my mind and shook it out, cleaned out a lot of the garbage, and set me to thinking straight. God started something happening in me that continues to this day in ways that surprise me, sometimes puzzle me, but always improve me.

The idea behind this sermon series, *Reboot: The Path of Jesus for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, grows out of that early experience. I wasn't the worst of sinners, and I was certainly the most average of church-goers. I was a tangle of mixed emotions, thoughts, and ideas, and a lot of it was governed by a very self-centered guidance system. This is what the Jesus Path does for us: it clears up the clutter and cuts through the garbage that our very dysfunctional and destructive world has dumped into our minds and psyches. It is the same work that the Holy Spirit did in a guy named Saul of Tarsus, 2000 years ago, that changed him from being a fire-breathing persecutor of followers of Jesus into one of the most influential preachers about Jesus and his Way. One way he described the change that Jesus brings about in our lives was having the mind of Christ.

## **Mind of Christ**

The idea of putting on the Mind of Christ, or having the Mind of Christ, was very important to Paul. This was because it was very important to Jesus, and the earliest followers of the Way. Paul talks about being transformed by renewing our minds in Christ (Romans 12), in contrast to being conformed to society's dysfunctions and destructiveness. We become New Humans, patterned not after Adam (our originative nature)

but rather after Jesus, the New Adam/New Human. Peter talks about followers of the Way as being a royal priesthood, or as living stones of the temple, because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All of these images describe a changed, transformed, differentiated character and quality of mind and heart.

### **Qualities of the Mind of Christ – in Paul’s view**

- 1. It is other-focused:** Verse 3: *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.”* The only way that the world will become a better place is to cast off the rapacious, greedy, self-interest that is running rampant. I have said it before and I will say it again and again: the love that Jesus taught and demonstrated is manifested in doing those things that contribute to the well-being of other persons, if not all persons. Self-interest benefits only me and mine. God-based love, the love that Jesus lived, benefits others.
- 2. We have to do it to get it:** It requires our continuous practice and work. Verses 12&13: *“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”* God is right there meeting us more than halfway, but we have to put in the effort as well. Jesus says, *“Forgive one another.”* We need to do the work of forgiveness, including forgiving ourselves. Jesus says, *“You feed them.”* We need to make sure that the hungry get fed, and work to end the conditions that lead to poverty and hunger. Jesus says, *“Give them water to drink.”* We need to do everything we can to make sure that our water systems are clean and pure, and freely available to all. Most of the spiritual work that Jesus teaches us is very practical stuff to do every day to improve the lives of those around us. And it is God within us enabling us to do those things, and then in the midst of our doing those things, we discover that God is using those things to expand our

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mind and consciousness, and to enlarge our hearts with compassion and empathy.

### **Cultivating these qualities**

This higher consciousness of what I like to call inter-abiding can only be achieved through the coupling of an active prayer life with direct service to others all while being actively engaged in a spiritually-supportive community. The mind of Christ is not achieved by merely wishing it into being or through the intellectual act of agreeing with theological or doctrinal statements. No, Paul echoes Jesus in this: it is achieved by how we treat one another, and how we orient our lives for the welfare of others. This is why Jesus openly engaged in acts of compassion and love as well as acts of mercy and justice. Doing these things—feeding the hungry as well as working to see that the conditions that caused them to be without food were corrected, visiting the sick as well as working for healthy living conditions and making the arts of healing available to all, working as a blessed peacemaker—are the mark of a true follower of Jesus. These “doers of the word” are the ones who will enter into the joy of life in Christ, because as we do it to the least among us, we have done it to Jesus (Matthew 25:31-46). This is a function of the greater consciousness, the mind of Christ. And it can only be achieved through actions.

### **The difference it makes**

This has nothing to do with being perfect persons. It has to do with stripping off the old crap in life that clings so closely and suffocates us. It has to do with being freed from the chains that the wounds and abuse we have experienced in life binds us with. It has to do with laying down the burden of guilt we accumulate by trying to live according to the contradictory, hypocritical, and manipulative standards that our dysfunctional society lays upon us daily. Jesus wants you to be free of all this. What he offers us is light, and frees us up to move, to live, to love, to dance and laugh and do those things that contribute to everyone’s well-

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being. This is what makes us happy. This is what blesses us and blesses other people. This is the Bigger Mind, Bigger Heart, Bigger World, and Bigger Life of the Jesus Path for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### **Conclusion – Shine Like the Stars!**

Paul concludes his comments in today’s Scripture reading by saying this: “Do all things without murmuring and arguing, so that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world.” We live in the midst of a crooked and perverse world. It is time for us to shine like stars in the heavens. Let the love of God shine through every word of encouragement you can give to others. Let the love of God shine through your support of local leaders and national politicians who work to bring equity and justice, and an end to poverty, hunger, discrimination, and violence. Let the love of God shine through your insistence upon telling the truth, and spreading only the truth in your communications. Let the love of God shine through the comfort you give to the grieving, and the joy you share with someone else’s celebrations. Let the love of God shine through the world you are giving to the children of the world, and what you want to bequeath their children. Shine like stars, my friends. Shine! Shine! Shine!