**Sermon Philippians 4:5-11 – Palm Sunday 10/4/22**

**Sermon Video Youtube Link:** [**https://youtu.be/2lyUwCJVbv8**](https://youtu.be/2lyUwCJVbv8)

It is amazing how much our thinking impacts the way we react to situations. Thirty years ago, I attended a retreat run by a psychologist to help me deal with some issues I was facing. The key thing I learned at that retreat is that you can change. You can change the way you react to people and situations. You can even change the way you feel. You can change and the process of change begins with recognising something needs to change.

As Christians, we acknowledge we are sinners, and we are taught to examine ourselves regularly. We are taught to be on the lookout for sin in our lives, to admit and accept what we find, and then to confess our sin and ask God to change us through Word and Sacrament and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

That whole process of examining ourselves and admitting to our sin involves our minds, and that is the other important aspect of change. We need to change our thinking. We need to stop making excuses and we need to stop blaming. We are all influenced heavily by our upbringing but at some point, you can no longer blame your parents or your background. At some point, you need to examine your thoughts, words, and actions in the clear light of God’s law and let the law convict you of where change is needed.

Accepting that you need to change can already be a big change in thinking because we are often blind to our weaknesses and many of us are very good at making excuses. The next step is believing that you can change and then addressing the beliefs that are leading to your unhelpful and even sinful words, actions, and feelings.

Change is deeper than thoughts about a particular situation, change involves changing your core beliefs. All your words, actions and emotions are impacted by your core beliefs. Jesus points this out when he says*, ‘For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person brings good things out of a good treasure, and the evil person brings evil things out of an evil treasure”* (Matt. 12:34-35, NRSV). Paul also knows this is true and speaks often about having a particular mindset. This mindset is the mindset of Christ.

For Paul, a key part of the Christian life is to take off your old self and old way of thinking and to put on Christ and Christ’s way of thinking. This involves a change in belief about fundamental things like who am I in relation to God and in relation to other human beings. It involves a change in your core values. Out of this new mindset flows a new life that makes a positive difference to you and all the people in your life.

What does having the mindset of Christ look like?

In our reading today we hear that even though Jesus is God, he *‘did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage’* (Phil 2:6, NIV). To have the mind of Christ means not using our status, power, position, or wealth to gain an advantage over others. Instead, if you find yourself in a position of power, be it as a parent, teacher, employer, boss, care provider, bureaucrat, politician, or any other sort of position of power, think about how you can use your power to serve.

Don’t think of yourself as being better than other people but instead think of all people in the same way Jesus thinks about them. In the mind of Jesus, every person is so valuable that he gave up his life for them. Therefore, seeking to have the mind of Christ, will lead you to place a very high value on your fellow human beings. You will come to believe that they have value, not because of their gifts and talents, not because of their position or wealth, and certainly not because of anything we may be able to gain from them. They have value because the Son of God hung on the cross for every single one of them.

When you think about other people with the same mindset that Jesus has, then certain things will flow out from that mindset. Things like compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. All these things will change how you hear what other people say, interpret what other people do, and even how you feel toward other people. In turn, this will change how you speak and act toward others. With the mindset of Christ, you will find yourself slowly changing from the inside out.

Of course, no one says change is easy. The great apostle Paul spends a whole chapter in Romans lamenting the struggles he has with change. Even though through God’s law he knows the right thing to say and do, his old sinful self seems far too often to get its way. Far too often Paul ends up doing what he does not want to do.

Paul realises that changing lifelong habits, changing the way we react to certain people and certain situations, and changing the way we feel, is a very difficult thing and not one of us will ever achieve total success. Change is also not something that you can do very successfully on your own. For Paul, the source of hope and the power to change came from Christ.

Thankfully God does not leave us alone to wallow in our sin. God has sent Jesus to rescue us even while we were still his enemies. Like the thief on the cross, Jesus has died for us and promised us a place in paradise. We have the assurance of being united with him in his death and resurrection through the gift of baptism. We have the gift of the Holy Spirit who renews our minds day after day, through the Word of God.

There is even more. We have the comfort of Christ’s love and his promise to always be with us, embracing us with His loving arms. We have each other, brothers, and sisters in Christ, able to share that same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. We have the word of peace and forgiveness offered to us by our Lord every moment of every day and spoken to us whenever we worship together in God’s name. We have the body and blood of Christ, given and shed for us for the forgiveness of sins, strengthening us in faith.

Therefore, when we fail to have the same mindset as Christ, we don’t have to throw in the towel thinking it is all too hard. Instead, we can keep on receiving from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We can keep on learning from our Lord and each other, seeking to live lives of love, compassion, kindness, humility, and gentleness. Finally, we can focus our minds on ‘whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, whatever is excellent or praiseworthy…put these things into practice and the peace of God will be with you’ (paraphrase of Phil 4:8-9).

**Amen**

Pastor Rolf Lungwitz