
A Reflection For Today

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Be of the Same Mind

(Texts: [Philippians 2:1-11](#))

As I write this reflection, I realize that Sunday is Palm Sunday and so begins Passion Week. Today - Monday - is the Monday of Passion Week. It is with fear and trepidation that I enter this week as we who know the story travel with Jesus through the highs and lows - the agony and the ecstasy - of this week.

Paul, in his letter to the churches at Philippi implores the church to be of *the same mind* as the Christ. Paul emphasizes our responsibility in this, in following Jesus, that we be of the *same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind...Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus...*



Paul echoes the same thing for which Jesus prayed in his final sermon to his disciples, just before his arrest, trial, conviction, and suffering:

“I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (John 17:20-23)

Paul describes the Christ as *emptying himself...humbling himself...to the point of death - even death on a cross*. This, my friends, is a very chilling image. We recall Jesus telling his followers - that is *us* - to “take up our cross daily and follow.” (Luke 9:23) Now we are faced *daily* with that challenge.

So, what does it mean for the Christ to *empty himself*? And, for us to be of the *same mind* means that we are to *empty ourselves* as well.

We have heard of Jesus doing so many amazing and miraculous things during his time on earth: he heals lepers and paralytics, he makes the blind see and the deaf hear, he changes the hearts of rich men and feeds the poor with abundance, and he brings the prodigal home. And so for Jesus, *emptying himself* means that even though he has the power to heal all these folks, even though he has the ear of God who listens to his prayers, even though he, as a human being, has the power to make his own decisions; he lays aside all of *that* power, for the power of justice, and to illustrate how far *injustice* may lead humankind - even to crucifying an innocent man.

Perhaps Jesus sees that the men who crucified him were ignorant of the loving power of God. They were acting on the orders of earthly governing authorities out of fear. Their fear of recriminations from *those* authorities is greater than their fear of God. I read somewhere that Jesus says in the Gospels, above anything else, “do not fear...” We see how fear of painful recrimination can make a person do horrendous things; even castigate, berate, and crucify an innocent man.

Paul himself was one of those ignorant men. Before his conversion in the Acts of the Apostles, we see him approving of the killing of Stephen. After Stephen gave what some have said is the most complete witness to Jesus as the Christ, “they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul...And Saul approved of their killing him.” (Acts 7:58, 8:1) Later on Saul becomes the Apostle Paul, the one who has most influenced the Church today. Such is the power of the love of God.

Jesus’ relationship with God allows him to trust what he hears God wants from him. God does not want Jesus to use his power to save himself! That is exactly the temptation that was put before him at the beginning of his ministry. (See Luke 4) Jesus trusts God. He trusts that somehow the life he lived and the death he died will bring life to those *who will believe in him* through the witness of those who have seen and believe. But for their power to be truly manifest in the world, they need to be of the *same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind...the same mind...that was in Christ Jesus...*

The challenge for our Churches, and for those who belong to them, is to be of the *same mind* as the Christ whom we profess to follow. We must lay aside our *earthly* power and be *the power of the loving Christ* in the lives of those who so desperately need to see his saving power among them. Jesus’ love was not a selfish love, but a love that *did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave...* And we, as his followers, are to have the *same mind*. Amen.

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