

**“THINK LIKE JESUS”**

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**Philippians 2:5-11**

**L**et 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 slave,  
     being born in human likeness.  
 And being found in human form,  
     he humbled himself  
     and became obedient to the point of death--  
     even death on a cross.  
 Therefore God also highly exalted him  
     and gave him the name  
     that is above every name,  
 so that at the name of Jesus  
     every knee should bend,  
     in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
 and every tongue should confess  
     that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
     to the glory of God the Father.

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Happy New Year! It's rare that we get to celebrate New Year's Day together in worship. It was a wonderful gift to have worship just a week ago on Christmas Day. Now we are gathered on New Years Day to start the year off in an auspicious way, a holy way, as we come into this place to thank God for a blank slate, a new beginning, a new year.

Do you make new years resolutions? Some of us make the same ones every year, and some say they have quit making them because they never

can keep them. But if we don't try, how can we possibly succeed? As the saying goes, "You'll miss every ball you don't swing at."

I wanted to preach from the passage in Philippians today because the first verse reads like a new year's resolution. "Have the same mind in you as was in Christ Jesus." Other translations say, "Have the same disposition as Jesus had." What better way to live would there be this?

I want us to explore briefly today what this might mean---to have the same mind in us as was in Christ Jesus. I've read this verse over many times, and been stunned by the very idea that the writer would even suggest this could be possible---to have the same mind as Christ Jesus. Is the scripture writer really suggesting this is possible?

The verses gave early Christians in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and believers today on January 1, 2012 a way to coming as close as possible to living like Jesus and thinking like he did. There are three steps Jesus followed in life.

First, even though Jesus was made in the same form as God, he didn't take advantage of that, but rather he took on human form----became one of us. If he hadn't, we would have a very different Savior, wouldn't we? Jesus could have taken the easy way out----never had any problems, never hungry, never tempted, never hated and run out of town, never plotted against. And never die. But he became one of us to show us how God wants us to live.

Second, he emptied himself. Jesus said, in effect, I want nothing to come from my own desire, only to honor God with my life. I desire nothing more than to help others and to do my heavenly Father's work. What I want doesn't matter. I only want what God wants. We can make that resolution. All I want to do today, Lord, is what you want.

Third, he humbled himself to be obedient to the point of death on the cross. It is fairly safe to say that none of us here this morning will be called to die on a cross. Yet, we can strive to be obedient. What does God ask you to do, and where are we asked to serve? How obedient am I to God's guidance in my life?

It seems at first glance that Christ's obedience had a terrible result in the way Christ died. But what was the end reward? God exalted him. God honored him. God gave him the name above all names, that at the name of Jesus every one would bow down in honor to the greatest man who ever walked on earth.

We can't be Jesus. But we can resolve to live more like him in 2012 and throughout life.

So we go back to those opening words: Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

Having the same mind as Jesus does not mean to be weak. Some people think that “meekness equals weakness”. Jesus stood up for people who were being mistreated and overlooked. He was humble but he was strong.

Being like Jesus mean also that we serve people in need. We have all had that warm experience, perhaps recently during the Christmas season, of giving to others. Maybe you served in some capacity to help folks in need. It probably filled your heart with a warmth and fullness that all the shopping and bustle of the season did not.

Why, then, would we fall back into our old routine when Christmas is over? Why can't serving become something we do daily? Why can't we live as Christ lived, and try to have the same mind in us as Jesus had?

Trying to live as Christ wants and think like Jesus isn't easy.

In the past week I have already been personally confronted with this fact--just how easy it is to make a pledge and mean it with all your heart, then in only days to find the same old sinful self messing up again.

On Christmas Eve as I knelt right here at this altar to take the Lord's supper, I took the bread and the cup and I felt it on my mouth and I prayed, God, thank you for your love. May nothing unkind be spoken from my mouth this year, may only words filled with love and compassion pass my lips that have now taken this supper in remembrance of you.

That was on the 24<sup>th</sup>. On the 27<sup>th</sup>, 3 days later....I said something I wish I hadn't, under my breath, and thankfully no one heard me. But I heard myself, and I immediately remembered my pledge, and I was heartbroken that I couldn't keep it for even 3 days. I asked God to forgive me. So how can I have the same mind as was in Christ Jesus?

So here we are again. Ready to start a new year. And I am making a commitment today on this New Years Day to make this verse my new year's resolution----to try to have the same mind as Christ Jesus had.

What I'm going to try to do is make this my rule of thumb:

When I have a decision to make, I'll ask “How would Jesus think about this?”

When I'm asked to give a helping hand, I will ask "How would Jesus react?"

Basically, the question is, "What would LOVE do?" Or as the saying has been around for the past several years, "What would Jesus do?"

To have the same mind as Jesus means that when we are tempted, as Jesus was, we don't say, "Oh, one time won't hurt anything." We push back as Jesus did when tempted and tell the devil to leave.

To have the same mind as Jesus means that when we hear or see others demeaning someone because of their lifestyle as when he was asked about the woman caught in adultery, we step up and say, "Who here is without sin? Let that person throw the 1<sup>st</sup> stone"

To have the same mind as Jesus means that when we see the sick or hungry, or see injustice around us, we step up to do something about it.

What if we resolved to start each day in 2012 by saying a prayer to start the day that goes something like this, "What is it that you want me to do today? Keep me alert God to the needs of people, help me serve and love. Help me think like you, Jesus."

Another important step in learning to think like Jesus is to actually know Jesus better and how he lived and acted. To think like Jesus we have to know how he thought. There are four excellent books I recommend for your reading that tell us about Jesus' life----Mathew, Mark, Luke, John. It's not a lot of reading to do and will give you a clear view of how Jesus lived to show us how to have the same mind.

Also being involved in one of our Bible studies is a great way to learn more about how Jesus lived and thought. Coming to a Sunday morning classes at 9:30 or midweek studies and worship on Wednesday, or the Women's study on Thursday are great resolutions to make this year.

Will you join me in this for 2012? Let's try it. We won't always succeed but let's try. Some recommend that you take a small piece of paper and jot down your prayer and pledge for the New Year, place it in your wallet or a safe place, and pull it out again next New Year's Day, God willing, and ask how you've done. That's a good idea.

What do we have to lose? And think of what we'd gain. I think it's at least worth a try, don't you?