

In search of the mind of Christ

There are two instruments that you must have if you are flying an airplane no matter how small or large. One is the compass and the other is the artificial horizon. The artificial horizon tells you the difference between “up” and “down.” To the non-pilot that may seem unnecessary but fly for a while in the clouds and you can easily become disoriented. Your mind will tell you one thing when reality could be something just the opposite.

We have no artificial horizon inside of us. We really have no internal compass. Most people think at one time or the other that they don’t need God or anyone else telling them what to do. They often think it’s their life and they can control it. This leads to nothing by destruction and damage to ourselves and those around us.

For this reason we should pursue the promise found in the Bible that we can know the mind of Christ. In fact we can not only know it but we can possess it. This lost truth is the foundation for this series of sermons. Over the next few weeks we are going to try to understand what it means to possess the mind of Christ.

In fact, I have a very deep feeling that this subject is not going away anytime soon. For the last 11 years I have walked an interesting road, Sunday after Sunday. Knowing that our church fills up each week with many people with little or no church background I have tried to preach and teach with an eye toward keeping it simple and yet have enough meat in the messages to be effective for others.

We are moving on. . .

My desire is for God to create a hunger in the hearts of our church people that is centered on God’s promise that we can walk in oneness with Him. Dennis Kinlaw said that the greatest gift God can give to any of us is an inner hunger for Himself. Our prayer should be, “Lord, intensify my hunger for you. Get me to the place where the deepest passion of my being is for you. There is no safety anywhere else. There is nothing of value anywhere else.”

There comes a time in your spiritual life where you need to either put up or shut up. Maybe that’s not the most tactful way to say it but you get the idea.

To not follow Christ 100 percent with your life is an insult to Christ and offensive because you take His name when you call yourself a Christian.

So with that in mind let’s start this journey together.

1. What does it mean to have “the mind of Christ?” Accepting the Definition

The bible has much to say about possessing the mind of Christ. The texts we will look at will suggest that we can have an internal guidance system that will enable us to walk like Jesus walks and to pursue the goals He pursues. We will possess godly attitudes and the passion of our Lord.

Many of the scriptural references appear in connection with the Greek word, “*phroneo*.” 29 times this word appears in the New Testament. In Mark 8, Jesus asks His disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” and Peter replies, “You are the Messiah.” Jesus then tells them that He is about to suffer and die. Peter cries out, “Forbid it Lord! This must never happen to You.” And Jesus says, “Get behind me Satan! For you are setting your *mind* not on divine things but on human things.”

In Philippians 2 we read these words, “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*”

In Romans 8 we find these words,

⁵ For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

To have the mind of Christ is to have His perspectives, His attitudes, His affections and priorities. The Bible calls us to have the mind of Christ within us, rather than merely learning to imitate Him. We are challenged to allow His mind to guide our lives.

I was reading about a football game of deaf high school kids. I thought to myself, “How in the world are they going to hear the calls for the plays since they are all deaf?”

What was interesting is that they all take to the field and look at the coach and the coach signs the plays. Then they nod and then watch the quarterback, he puts his hands down, the ball is snapped and they take off.

But what was most intriguing of all is how they substitutes on the sideline. All of them want to play football. But how does the coach make the exchange since they can’t hear? As soon as the play is done and the guy is tackled, all the kids look at the coach. If he does not sign them in, they watch the play and as soon as it is done, they look at the coach again.

I thought, “Lord, please make my heart like that. I want to be ready by fixing my eyes on You, and be ready to go when you give the sign.”

2. Starting with the Old Testament: Avoiding Disaster

Abraham’s attempt to get an heir through Hagar:

There are a couple of Old Testament stories you should study. One is the story of Abraham and it is found in Genesis 15. Although God had promised him a son the older he and his wife got the more he doubted it. Eventually they took matters into their own hands and Abram conceived a

son by Hagar the servant of his wife and they named the boy Ishmael. The strife that started in his family continues to this day in the context of Muslims versus Jewish and Christian beliefs. His impulsive decision shows that even someone trying to be devout and follow God has the capability of fail to not have the mind of God or think like He thinks.

King Saul's blasphemy at the altar at Gilgal:

In 1 Samuel 13, we read of the blasphemy of King Saul. He was the first King of Israel and he was chosen by God. In a time of great fear and facing an overwhelming enemy force he went into the temple where God had said only priest should ever go and offered a sacrifice. Offering a sacrifice was clearly the right thing to do but the way in which he went about it was just as clearly wrong. In fact the history of many of the Kings of Israel is a sad tale of disobedience more often than not.

Yet there are others that clearly walked with God and followed His wishes on a daily basis. Enoch walked with God, Noah was a righteous man and blameless in his generation and Elijah also was found to be faithful. King Hezekiah also walked before God with faithfulness and a whole heart.

One of my favorite Old Testament verses is found in Ezekiel.

²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations. Ezekiel 36:26-27 NLT

What you and I must come to embrace is that God is able to enable His people to think like He thinks and to live it out every day in word, thought and deed.

3. Not everyone will find it: Aspire Discernment

It is clear both in history and today that not everyone that claims to know Christ or even the mind of Christ truly has it. In fact the Bible suggests that it will be somewhat rare for people to think like Christ thinks.

In the New Testament, those in religious authority completely missed out on knowing who Jesus was. The purpose of the Temple in Jerusalem was to identify the Messiah when He came. But everything about Jesus and His teaching was upside down as far as they way humans think. They expected a Messiah of great power and strength. They expected Him to be a strong military leader to overthrow the Roman domination.

They couldn't understand how a carpenter's son born in a stable and riding on a donkey could be anything but a flake. They couldn't understand how a friend to fishermen and tax collectors could possibly be a teacher from God, let alone the Son of God.

Jesus was self-sacrificing. He demonstrated that His ultimate authority came in the form of a broken and bleeding body on a cross. It was a demonstration of power. Not like we think of power but power that allows you to sacrifice yourself for someone other than yourself. Most of us rarely wrap our heads around this.

If you study the gospel of Mark you will find that most of the last half of the book centers around the original disciples learning how much they didn't know and how much they didn't understand about the mind of Jesus Christ.

It begins with a question asked by Jesus to Peter: "But who do you say that I am?"

They apparently begin to know who Jesus is but from then on they begin to find out who they are.

Listen carefully, this ought to be the pattern in all of our lives. It is only after we become Christians that we begin to discover how deeply sin is rooted in our lives. The guilt you feel after you are converted to Christ will be much more intense than it was before.

We should aspire to possess this discernment. We should desire to know Christ and know him on a daily and growing basis. Our relationship with Him should be allowing us to become more like Him day by day.

Last week's sermon text was from Mark and highlighted the inability of the disciples to meet the need of the man with a possessed son. Later on we see them in the New Testament in a far different place in their spiritual walk and journey. The point is we must be in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ and in that growth we will learn to be more like Him. We will learn to have His mind as we live out our daily lives.

I want a principle within of watchful, godly fear,

A sensibility of sin, a pain to feel it near.

I want the first approach to feel of pride or wrong desire,

To catch the wandering of my will, and quench the kindling fire. Charles Wesley 1749

4. The Carnal mind versus the Mind of Christ: Acknowledge our Dilemma

While the Bible suggests that few people have actually possessed the mind of Christ, it also emphatically emphasizes that God calls His people to this place of intimate communion with Him.

The unwillingness to accept this as a possibility has plagued the church from its very beginning.

The apostle Paul reminded the Christians at Rome and in Corinth of this very thing:

For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷ Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸ So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. Romans 8:6-8 NKJV

Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in the Christian life. ² I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, ³ for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 NLT

The symptoms of being carnally minded? They lusted after the same things as unconverted people wanted. They were locked in power struggles within the church. They couldn't understand even the most simple of spiritual teachings. They continued in spiritual immaturity and weakness, thus rendering them totally ineffective to impact the world around them.

Every great move of God, (revival) has begun when men and women got serious about seeking the mind of Christ.

When we are willing to set aside our preconceived notions about God and when we are willing to push past the clutter of the world around us and pursue God I believe we can find Him. When we allow Christ to possess us completely we have the potential to turn the world upside down.

What are you doing to learn about the mind of Christ?

How much does Christ have of your mind, your actions and your reactions?

You remember the artificial horizon instrument that you saw in the beginning of this sermon? There is another official name for that instrument. It is also called an attitude indicator.

During this series and even today it is my hope that God will be allowed to check our attitude regarding our relationship with Him.

Story from Kinlaw's book

In the book, No Bad Dogs, by British dog trainer Barbara Woodhouse, she says dogs understand love better than we do. She writes, "In a dog's mind, a master or a mistress to love, honor, and obey is an absolute necessity. The love is dormant in the dog until brought into full bloom by an understanding owner. Thousands of dogs appear to love their owners, they welcome them home with enthusiastic wagging of the tail and jumping up, they follow them about their houses happily and, to the normal person seeing the dog, the affection is true and deep. But to the experienced dog trainer this outward show is not enough. The true test of love takes place when the dog has got the opportunity to go out on its own as soon as the door is left open by mistake and it goes off and often doesn't return home for hours. That dog loves only its home comforts and the attention it gets from its family; it doesn't truly love the master or mistress as they fondly

think. True love in dogs is apparent when a door is left open and the dog still stays happily within earshot of its owner. For the owner must be the be-all and end-all of a dog's life." The real test of our walk of Faith isn't seen in our work or activity, or even in our theological purity. It's found in this: when we have an opportunity to wander away, to disobey, to leave His presence, do we choose instead to stay close to Him, to abide in Christ, to obey?