



**SUNDAY OF THE PASSION
APRIL 5, 2020
“FINDING OUR WAY HOME”**

PHILIPPIANS 2: 5-11

Let 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.

SERMON

When working with clients in psychotherapy, I would remind folks overly focused on figuring out what someone else was doing: “when you are in their head, you are out of your mind.”

Gandhi insisted that he would not let anyone walk through his mind with their dirty feet.

And, it is true that most of us should not go into our mind without a companion.

Because when we do, most of us get caught up in imaginary story lines about other people and why they do what they do. Or we start to ruminate or we get lost in some anxious narrative.



So, it seems important to pay attention to this startling statement by Paul: **have the same mind in you that was in Christ Jesus.**

The first step in following Paul's spiritual guidance, of course, is that we have to **wake up**. The diagnosis in the New Testament is that, in our natural state of mind, we are asleep.

Perhaps this is why television shows and movies about zombies are so popular. They express what is happening. So many people sleep walking through life. Voraciously looking for something to feed on that might keep them alive and breathing. Sucking the life blood out of other people....

The western Christian church year begins with Jesus telling us to be awake, to be alert, to become conscious.

Similarly, in the east, Buddha's name means *I am awake* and, parenthetically, everyone else is asleep....

Today's reading is thought to be one of the earliest Christian hymns. And early on, it speaks of Jesus emptying himself. What the ancient church called kenosis—a process of self-emptying.

This led the Franciscan teacher Bonaventure to describe father, son, and spirit as a fountain full of love. That the trinity moves like a waterwheel.

God creator pours love into God redeemer who empties love into the inner presence of the spirit and then an emptying back into the creator. Nothing is held back. One pours and empties into the other, knowing that a refilling of love will occur. Father, son, and spirit exist at the center of the universe as a flow of infinite love....

But right now, many of us may be buying into a model of scarcity. Will we have enough toilet paper or disinfectant wipes? Will we have enough food? Will there be enough money? When will my stimulus check arrive?



We might not be able to let go of anything for someone else because we do not believe there is enough to go around. We might not be able to let go because we do not trust we will be refilled.

As of Friday, CLC has given out over \$6,000 in grocery gift cards to 175 families in Millvale. We're grateful to our members, members of element church, the Millvale police department, all the teachers in the Shaler school system and our friends through the nation who have provided us with money for these gift cards. Each person who has contributed has let go of some of their resources for the sake of the other, trusting that there is enough.

We keep giving. We keep running out, trusting that we will be refilled. We keep letting go. But to do so takes trust in the infinite love at the center of the universe....

What the ego wants to do is hold onto whatever it has. The ego wants to remain full of myself. This is the nature of sleepy human institutions and the human ego.

In waking up, we come to realize that Christ is not the last name of Jesus, but the title designating Christ as the universe and Christ as our spiritual home.

When we wake up, we discover that the mind of Christ is not in us, but we are in the mind of Christ who fills up the entire universe.

We come from Christ at our birth. We live in the mind of Christ during our lifetime. And we return to Christ when our earthly life ends.

The point of Jesus walking the earth is to reveal the mind of Christ.

When we awaken, we discover we are in the flow of the mind of Christ.

When I am in the Christ flow, a sermon pours into me. After years, I finally discovered that my job is to have paper and pen handy or get to my computer.

When I was in the flow in my psychotherapy practice, nine or ten hours of clients passed like a flash when I was able to empty my ego and get out of the



way. When people would return the next week, and ask me to repeat what I had told them, I could never remember.

Usually I was amazed that something worthwhile had come out of my mouth. This was a sign that I had emptied myself and had allowed a higher wisdom to speak through me....

When we are in our natural mind, we habitually clamp down on depressing or anxious thoughts.

Depressing thoughts are about the past. Coulda, woulda, shoulda. Ruminating about what we consider bad decisions. Sinking into shame. Wanting to hide from our own humanity. If I had only....

Anxious thoughts are about the future: how long are we going to be at home? In another two weeks I'm going to go crazy. I don't know what I'm going to do if....

And then, in our minds, we find ourselves imagining a month down the road and we're crawling out of our skin.

Our spiritual home is in the present moment within the mind of Christ. What Jesus called the kingdom of God.

In his first sermon, Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God is in our midst. Falling on us. Within us. And we within it.

This is what Jesus revealed to us: let go of the deceptions and charades of our natural mind in order to be more and more present to the mind of Christ and what reality actually is....

In the ancient world, men and women left the city and moved to the desert. There they developed a deep spirituality. And one aspect of their spirituality was called the "shedding of thoughts." This allowed them to enter the same mind that was in Christ Jesus.

In the same way, the mystic, Meister Eckhart said, "God is not found in the soul by adding anything, **but by a process of subtraction.**"



This is in direct opposition to our capitalist culture which daily urges us to accumulate more and keep it for yourself. We will be more successful, more attractive, sexier, hipper, cooler, more with it, more safe and secure, and live longer and better if we only buy this product and store it away. Heck, get another storage facility for all the useless things we think we must have.

How's that working for us?

The purpose of mature religion and deep spirituality is to keep us from ending up at the dead end of the street. The purpose of mature religion and deep spirituality is to get us out of our insane natural mind where we keep doing the same thing and expecting different results.

Get into the mind of Christ and discover that love is our home.

Out of the mind of Christ comes the great commandment: "love the lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. And your neighbor as yourself..."

Growing up, whenever I got too full of myself, my father would intensely remind me that the world did not revolve around my rearend, although he was a bit more graphic.

The world does not revolve around any of our rearends, although each of our egos would like to think so.

Mature spirituality teaches us freedom from our own mind in order that we live in the mind of Christ.

And being in the mind of Christ means a constant letting go....

Today we head into holy week, where Jesus ultimately let's go of his life. Jesus lets go through intense and immense suffering. He shows us the way. The way of our own suffering.

There are two kinds of suffering. Neurotic suffering and authentic suffering.



Neurotic suffering hurts like hell. We hate it. But nothing changes. We always return to the same old bad choices, the same old destructive patterns, the same old same old.

Authentic suffering hurts like hell. We hate it. But transformation occurs. The natural mind is converted, to use an old religious term. The ego dies and new life arises from the dying.

This is what we find as Easter unfolds. Jesus has been nailed to the cross in his own authentic suffering and has risen to new life, transformed in such a way that even his closest friends will not recognize him.

Authentic suffering sheds us of the mind's old thoughts and feelings and returns us to our spiritual home: the mind of Christ.

As we more fully live in our spiritual home, the mind of Christ, we become increasingly comfortable in our own skin. The home of our own particular, peculiar life. And we are able to let go and care for the lives of others.

As we more fully live in the mind of Christ, we live in love.

As we more fully live in our spiritual home, the mind of Christ, we have reverence for all things in all of creation.

Perhaps this time at home can be a time when we face how far we have strayed from our home on earth. It is a time when we may recognize that the mind of Christ is in all things.

Did you know that scientists say there is a noise that a snowflake makes when it lands on water, **like the wail of a coyote**. The sound reaches a climax and then fades away, all in about one ten-thousandth of a second. A snowflake, momentarily alive and then crying out.

Scientists have evidence that plants communicate, emitting different-sounding reactions to touch, sound and light. Think about that the next time you pull up a



weed. The forest really does hum with life. Insects, animals, trees and plants hum with life. There is evidence plants hear each other's sounds. Trees emit a different sound when there is a drought.

All is sacred. The earth is our sacred home. God walked this earth, told parables about nature. Died on a tree. All living things hum and cry out within the mind of Christ, another name for the sacredness of the universe.

The ultimate sacred outcome of this pandemic is that we might awaken from our natural minds and find ourselves within the mind of Christ. We might let go of our egoic strivings for more. And let go. As they say in twelve step groups, we only need more and more of what is not working.

The ultimate sacred outcome of this pandemic is that, in finding our home in the mind of Christ, we might be transformed and experience our own sacred dignity and worth.

Letting go to find ourselves within the sacredness of our home within the mind of Christ.

And within the sacredness of our home within the mind of Christ there is love.

As the Sufi poet, Rumi, wrote: your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built against it.

My friends, let's go home.

SERMON SONG

FEELS LIKE HOME BY BONNIE RAITT/RANDY NEWMAN