Sermon Text – Sunday, September 27, 2026 – Pastor Paula Kraus

1st Reading: Ezekiel 18:1-4,25-32; 2nd Reading: Matthew 21:23-32
Scripture for Message: Philippians 2:1-13 "Same Mind"

Hear this charge from Paul: "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." Followers of Christ are called to put others before themselves. How do we know what to do? What will all of that look like? How do we know the mind of Christ?

First of all, we can only know the mind of Christ through study of scripture – if you want to know what Jesus would do in any given situation you need to look at the information about Jesus in the New Testament writings. Paul's writings lay it all out for us and our reading this morning succinctly tells us what Paul believes is in the mind of Christ. Christ emptied himself, humbled himself to the point of death without any claim of return or reward. The attitude of Christ was a humble attitude, not considering himself better than others, looking to the interests of others, and doing nothing from selfish ambition or conceit.

So, an attitude common with Christ Jesus would be an attitude of humility. That's kind of a dirty word these days – the humble ones are the ones who get stepped on in our world or in the political arena, looking to the interests of others is not popular these days. Isn't the cry of our culture "every man for himself" which is an attitude to describe a situation in which people do not help each other and each person must take care of himself or herself. We know, however, that was not the attitude of Christ Jesus, and that is not the proper attitude for Christians or those who wish to serve God in the church.

Don't be fooled, Jesus did look out for himself; that is illustrated when he would go off to a remote quiet place to commune with his father in solitude. "Look out for yourself" is about recognizing your own needs and ensuring you are supported and safe, especially in challenging or uncertain situations. It involves self-care, self-compassion, and personal responsibility. Prioritizing yourself is not selfish; it allows you to maintain energy, resilience, and clarity, which in turn enables you to engage more effectively with others and with life's demands. So, maybe the cultural cry of the church should be "Look out for yourself, while looking to the interests of others" – do nothing out of selfish interest or conceit.

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When we think of humility, sometimes we think of low self-esteem or self-diminishment but that is not Christian humility. For Jesus, humility meant that the last will be first and the first will be last. Christian humility is having the proper attitude toward humanity and toward God's creation. This is what Thomas Aquinas said about humility, "Keeping oneself within one's own bounds, not reaching out to things above one, but submitting to one's superior." As Christians, we know that only Christ is superior therefore submission is to Christ and Christ alone. That is the proper Christian attitude.

For Paul, the selfish eye, the pompous mind, the ear hungry for compliments and the mouth that speaks none, the heart that has little room for others, and the hand that serves only self has no place in the body of Christ. The type of humility that comes from having the same mind as Christ Jesus is a humility that brings us to unity in the body of Christ. Unity expressed by a willingness to turn away completely from our own privileges in order that we might focus on the needs of others.

Looking at what Paul writes about Christ Jesus we can see that the foundations of Christ's actions were submission and servanthood – "he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death." To have unity, Christian's actions must be built upon similar foundations; if you learn to serve one another, you will not slander one another you will overcome prejudices and biases toward those who are "different." Open yourself to see different interests, motivations, concerns, and suffering in any given situation. Look at things from all sides and points of view. Listen generously and with humility, suspending judgment while you gather all the facts and views.

Using beautiful, theological, and Christological images Paul writes about Jesus' actions in humility and obedience. Jesus suffered a death that held no claim of return or reward, yet he submitted to God the Father for our sakes. The rest was God's work – exalting Christ and placing his name above every name. It was God who made Jesus Lord over every power in the created order. Paul explains that the central event in the drama of salvation was an act of humble service. It was Christ's actions and obedience that resulted in God exalting him for God's own glory.

Jesus' mind, Jesus' attitude was one of humble service to God the Father, to humanity, and to all of creation. Too often the church twists the idea of humble service into something for their own glory rather than

God's. Too often the church seeks to "mind their own business" tending to the affairs of the church alone and putting church needs above the needs of the community of believers. Having the same mind that was in Christ Jesus would be contrary to minding one's own business according to Fred Craddock's interpretation of Paul's writing:

> If minding one's own business meant an unwillingness to bear another's burden, a distancing of oneself from partnership in the gospel, an aloofness from the common joy and suffering, a coldness to all the ways we are members one of another, then such individualism is destructive of the community and a contradiction of the gospel which speaks and sings of a Christ who was first and always the servant of others.[1]

Paul has told us what Jesus Christ did in humility and servanthood. Paul has told us what God's response was "so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth." So now, in the last couple verses of our scripture reading we are given Paul's instructions for what we, who are of the same mind as Christ Jesus, must do. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Paul is not saying "work **for** your own salvation" we know that is not possible, we cannot "earn" salvation it is ours for the taking. Paul is telling the church to not get lazy about their spirituality – keep working at godliness and take time to be holy. Do this with fear and trembling or better said – with a proper attitude of awe and reverence. David Jeremiah writes about this passage, "The phrase "work out: has the meaning of working something through to its full completion."[2] Working out our salvation means not taking salvation for granted and taking the responsibility of a believer very seriously.

The ending of our scripture reading today is a reminder to rely on God, for it is God who is at work in you. "God has worked in Us, God is working in us, God will continue to work in us." David Jeremiah writes, "We are to work diligently so that we might realize the benefit of all that God has done and is doing for us. Both divine enablement and human responsibility are involved" (IBID). Rely on God because all things are possible for God.

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[1] Fred B. Craddock. *Philippians: Interpretation A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching.* WJK. 1985. Print. p38

[2] David Jeremiah. *Turning Toward Joy – Philippians.* Chariot Victor Publishing. 1992. Print. p81

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Paul tells us that the Christian mindset, or attitude, must be the same mind that was in Christ Jesus. What we learned from our reading is that a Christian mindset is one of humility, unity, servanthood, and partnership. Partnership with God our creator to work out our own salvation – for God's good pleasure. We often hear laments about what God is doing in this world – why isn't God working to feed the hungry or get rid of evildoers. When I read this message from Paul, my mind turns to the fact that it is God who is at work in you, enabling you – so if you aren't doing anything about the world's needs and are not looking to the interests of others – guess what the result will be. God enables believers to work in this world according to God's will.

This means that the church, and those who worship in the church, must partner with God to accomplish God's will in the world. God is the enabler; God will not do for us what we should be doing ourselves. On our own we can do nothing yet in partnership with God, in humility and servanthood, nothing is impossible when done according to God's will. Paul's message is an important one for the church – if in anyway Christ has encouraged, consoled, or shown compassion and sympathy be of the same mind. Treat others as Christ treats you. Encourage those who need encouragement and console those who need consoling. When we, as Christians, have the experience of Christ in our life – share that with others.

Finally, Paul knows 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." This is according to God's will as we live lives worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.