

IFES World Assembly 2015 – morning July 26  
 Dr. Darrell Johnson (Pastor in Vancouver/Canada)

**Text: Philippians 1:27-2:11**  
**Title: “Having the Mind of Christ”**

---

**“Have this attitude in yourselves which was in Christ Jesus.”**

Philippians chapter two, verse five.

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was in Christ Jesus.”

Or as others translate it:

“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.”

Or even more simply:

“Think the same way Christ Jesus thinks.”

The same way He has always thought and always will.

**“Let the same mind be in you that was (and is) in Christ Jesus.”**

When we actually live this exhortation ...  
 and we can only live it by grace ...  
 everything else falls into place.

For when we understand the mind of Christ Jesus,  
 when we get inside the mind of the Saviour of the world  
 and Lord of the universe,  
 and understand what He understands,  
 everything else falls into place.

Jesus says there are two great commandments:

one, “You shall love the Lord your God all your heart,  
 and with all your soul,  
 and with all your mind”

and two, “You shall love your neighbor  
 as you love yourself.”

I submit to you,  
 that when we understand the mind of Jesus,  
 we will *all the more want* to love the Lord our God  
 with our whole being;

and we will realize that there is *no other way to live*

in this world  
 than by loving our neighbors  
 as we love ourselves.

And Jesus makes it clear that “neighbors”  
 includes our enemies.

“Let the same mind be in you which was (and is) in Christ Jesus.”

What Paul then goes on to say  
 in Philippians 2:6 and following,  
 “Who being in the form of God  
 did not regard equality with God to be  
 something to take advantage of,  
 but emptied Himself,  
 taking the form of a servant,”  
 is the mind of Jesus.

And I think what Paul writes  
 is the central text of the whole letter.  
 I will be bolder: the central text of the whole Bible!

So much so, that for me,  
 what Paul goes on to reveal about the mind of Jesus  
 in Philippians 2:5-11, is

*“That-in-light-of-which-everything-else-is-to-be-understood.”*

Philippians 2:5-11 takes us into the very heart of everything.

Into the very heart of Jesus.

Into the very heart of God.

And into the very heart of human beings  
 created and redeemed in the image of God  
 we know in Jesus.

So you can understand why  
 I would want to simply focus this morning on 2:5-11.

I could preach three, four, five sermons on the text!

But I have to honour where Paul has placed this  
 “text above all texts”  
 in the flow of the letter.

I agree with those who suggest



Later in his letter, in chapter four,  
Paul will even name names!

“I urge Euodia and Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord” (4:2).

We do not have enough historical data  
to know the exact nature of the conflict.

But whatever it was,  
their strained relationship  
was putting strain on the whole fellowship.

And, just as importantly,  
weakening the congregation’s witness in the city.

So Paul writes to help the church in Philippi move forward.

1:27 - **“Live your lives in a manner  
worthy of the gospel of Christ.”**

I suggested on Thursday morning,  
that this exhortation is the “driving-force” of the whole letter.

Literally, the text begins with the word “only.”

“Only live your lives  
in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”

By putting “only” at the beginning of the sentence,  
Paul is saying in effect,  
“Let me get to the major reason I am writing.”  
“Only.”

If the Philippians will do this one thing,  
this “only,”  
they will move forward in the will  
of Jesus for His church.

**“Only, live your lives  
in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”**

Now, what I want to show today  
is that what empowers us to live 1:27 is 2:5.  
That is, what enables us to “live worthy of the gospel of Christ,”  
is the exhortation,  
*“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,”  
is the only way the “only” can be lived.*

The word Paul uses in 1:27,

“live your lives in a manner,”  
 would immediately grab the attention  
 of those living in Philippi.

I am going to bother telling you the Greek word again  
 because it helps us get what Paul is getting at.

It is the word *politeuomai*.

And it literally means, “live as citizens of the polis.”

Do you hear and see the little word “poli” in *politeuomai*?

“Poli,” or, “polis,” means city, or city-state.

It is the root of many English words having to do with  
 our corporate lives:

polity,  
 politics,  
 politician,  
 police,  
 metropolitan,  
 cosmopolitan.

Now, here is why using the word  
 Paul immediately got the attention  
 of the disciples of Jesus living in Philippi.

“Polis” was the organizing centre of their lives.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century,  
 it was the “polis,” the city, the city-state,  
 that shaped an individual’s life.

As one scholar put it:  
 the “polis” gave “individual” citizens  
 “scope for the use of all [their] gifts  
 and the realization of all [their]  
 potentialities” (F.W. Beare).

You likely know that the philosopher Aristotle  
 wrote a full treatise on the “polis,”  
 in what many other philosophers  
 consider his greatest work,  
 simply entitled “Politics.”

The meaning of one’s life  
 was determined by the “polis” to which one belonged.

The “polis” expressed itself in all kinds of ways:

as agriculture, arts, technology, architecture;  
as institutions, laws, customs, manners;  
as language, philosophy, religion,  
spirituality, world view.

The “polis” to which a person belonged –

be it Jerusalem, or Athens, or Sparta, or Rome,  
or Philippi, or Kuala Lampur, or Berlin, or Mexico City,  
or Hong Kong, or Rio De Janero, of Dubai –  
determined how one lived his or her daily life,  
how one spent one’s money,  
how one treats other people.

The “polis” to which one belonged

gave him or her their values, goals, priorities.

Easy enough to understand, right?

So back to the “drum-beat” of Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

From Rome – in most people’s mind THE “polis of all poli” –

Paul reminds those living in the “polis” of Philippi,  
that the gospel of Jesus Christ  
creates a new “polis.”

The gospel of Jesus Christ creates a new city,

a new city-state,  
a new Kingdom,  
a new Dominion,  
a new Culture,  
a whole new way of ordering human life.

In relationship with Jesus Christ

we belong to that new “polis.”

Playing off the word Paul uses,

we become citizens of the “Gospel-polis.”

And as we go on living in our

“metropolitan,” “cosmopolitan” cultures,  
Jesus calls us to also, and primarily,  
live in His

“Gospel-politan” culture.

**“Only, live you lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”**

So I will paraphrase Paul like this:

“My dear friends in Christ living in Philippi.

You have the unique privilege of being citizens  
of the Roman empire.  
And you know the privileges and duties of life  
in the Roman-polis.

You know its guiding myths,  
its traditions,  
its expectations,  
its values,  
its laws,  
its trajectories,  
its logic.

It is all deeply ingrained in your minds,  
stamped on your hearts.

You know the gospel of Caesar.

You know what it means to live  
in a manner worthy of the gospel of Caesar.

I remind you that you are now dual citizens.

You carry two passports.

For in relationship with Christ Jesus,  
you also belong to the Gospel-of-Christ-polis.

Indeed, you primarily belong to the Gospel-of-Christ-polis.

Your primary address is in the realm  
where the Gospel is law,  
where the Gospel shapes values and priorities,  
where Jesus is Soter and Kurios,  
where the Spirit of Jesus breathes life  
in all its fullness,  
where the ‘national interest’ is the glory of God.

Now, only  
.... only live your lives worthy of your high calling.

Live worthy of your citizenship in Gospel-polis.

Live Gospel-politan lives.”

And what does this all mean?

That is what Paul is unpacking in the rest of  
the section of his letter we read today;  
in 1:28 to 2:18.

We can gather it up in five words, the fifth being the key.

**(1). First, tension.**

Living as citizens of heaven on earth can,  
and often does,  
lead to great tension.

And, therefore, sometimes to trouble.

1:28-30.

Sometimes the Gospel-politan life  
squares with the cosmo-politan life.

Sometimes the Gospel-politan life  
enlivens and nurtures  
aspects of the cosmo-politan life:  
like art and music and medicine and science.

But sometimes the two different ways of living collide.

Sometimes the Gospel-politan life  
calls the cosmo-politan life into question;  
sometimes the Gospel even rejects aspects of  
the cosmo-politan life as not in sync  
with humanity in the image of God;  
  
aspects of the prevailing culture  
that are non-Gospel or even anti-Gospel.

Which means that sometimes  
disciples of the true Soter and Kurios suffer.

Which is why Paul encourages his friends in Christ by saying,

“For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake,  
not only to believe in Him,  
but also to suffer for His sake.”

It is what was happening to Paul in Rome.

It is what is happening to millions of disciples  
around the world today.



It is what is happening to many of you.

But Paul does not leave it at that.

For he is confident that the Gospel  
is God's power to change the cosmos.

So he goes on.

## **(2). Second, unity.**

Living as citizens of heaven on earth means living in unity.

Juntos. Ensemble.

Did you see and hear the words  
“one,” “together,” “same,” “united,” as we read the text?

1:27 -  
“Standing firm in one spirit,  
with one mind striving together  
for the faith of the gospel.”

2:2 -  
“Being of the same mind,  
maintaining the same love,  
united in spirit,  
intent on one purpose.”

Living worthy of the “Gospel of Christ,”  
means living in unity,  
living together in harmony,  
moving in the same direction,  
united in spirit and in mind.

Why?

Why unity?

For one thing, the One Who has called us to Himself is One.

The God we worship is One;  
the Triune God of grace is One.

Trinity within unity.

“Hear, O Israel.  
Yahweh is our God,  
Yahweh is one!” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

A dis-united Jesus community  
does not reflect the essential character of its Lord.

For another thing, the Gospel of Christ  
is the Gospel of reconciliation.

As Paul writes in his second letter to the Corinthians:

“God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (5:19).

As Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians:

“God, being rich and mercy,  
because of His great love with which He loved us,  
even when we were dead in our transgressions,  
made us alive together in Christ” (2:4-5).

The Gospel has removed all the barriers between us and God.

And the Gospel tears down the barriers between us and others.

Living worthy of the Gospel  
can only mean seeking reconciliation.

But the biggest reason unity is the mark of heavenly citizenship  
is that this was what the Author and Content of the Gospel  
prays for.

John 17.

Jesus asks the Father,  
“that they may all be one;  
even as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You,  
that they also may be in Us;  
that the world may believe that You sent Me” (17:21).

Jesus prays for oneness of mind and spirit.  
Jesus prays that we live in harmony.

For our sake, and for the world's.  
For according to Jesus  
the world will believe the Gospel  
when it sees it fleshed-out in  
the unity of the church.

Now, Paul's call to unity,  
Jesus' prayer for unity,  
does mean uniformity.

It does not mean making carbon-copy disciples.

It does not mean institutional sameness.

It does not mean belonging to one, world-wide denomination.

For one thing,  
we humans are far too wonderfully diverse for uniformity.

For another,  
no one way of being disciples of Jesus  
can possibly manifest His multi-facet-ed glory.

What Paul is calling us to,  
what Jesus is praying us into,  
is harmony.

Living in harmony  
with each other's unique experience of  
and expressions of Jesus;

working together in different ways toward the same goal –  
the glory of God and the transformation of the world.

Many have put it this way:  
the Gospel has the power to pull us together into a symphony.

Members of a symphony do not play the same instruments.

Nor do the members all play the same note.

Most importantly, they do not play their own compositions!

What they do is  
play the same musical score,  
under the direction of the same conductor.

“The result is not unison, but harmony”  
(so Stuart Briscoe, Bound for Joy).

In the early days of the church in Philippi,  
they were playing in harmony.

That richly diverse congregation was playing in harmony.

The core of the church represented the whole church:  
an upper-class Asian businesswoman;  
a middle-class Roman jailer;  
a lower-class freed Greek slave girl.

Then something started to go south.

So Paul calls them back on the path.

### **(3). Third, resources.**

Living as citizens of heaven on earth is possible  
because of the resources of the Gospel.

The God of unity has given us all we need to live in harmony.

Chapter two, verses 1-2.

“If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ,  
if there is any consolation of love,  
if there is any fellowship of the Spirit,  
if any affection and compassion,  
make my joy complete by being of the same mind ...”

In that series of “ifs”  
Paul is pointing us to the provisions of the Gospel.

“Encouragement in Christ.”

The word “encouragement” [parakaleo] means  
“called in along side.”

Called in alongside to lift up and support.

“Encouragement in Christ.”

Meaning Christ is the One called in along side  
to lift up and support.

He gives His strenght to sustain His Body, His church.

“Consolation of love.”

Who’s love?

Ours?

Or God’s?

Paul is referring to the love of God in Christ.

He is calling the church into the love of God.

“Do you not realize the nature of that love?” Paul is asking.

“God’s love hangs in there with us  
when we do not have our act together.

So you can too; you can hang in there with others  
who do not have their act together.

God does not cast us away  
when our theological doctrines are not  
fully in line with Him.

So you too; do not cast someone away  
because you do not fully agree with them.

God does not send us away when we sin;  
He keeps calling us to Himself,  
to find forgiveness and cleansing.

So you too; do not let your sins break your relationships.

You have been embraced in the scandalous love of God;  
embrace one another as sinners forgiven  
and in the process of being changed.”

“The fellowship of the Spirit.”

Christ has breathed His Spirit, His very Life into our common life.

Christ has breathed His power into our common life.

The Spirit binds us to Christ,  
and in Christ to His Father,  
and then to one another.

The Spirit is always drawing us into  
the fellowship that is God,  
into the Friendship that is God,  
into the unity of the Trinity.

“Affection and compassion.”

Who’s affection and compassion?

Ours?

Or God’s?

God’s!

“Affection.”

The same word we meet earlier in the letter –  
*splangkna*.

1:8 -

“I long for you all with the *splangkna* of Christ Jesus.”

Bowels, guts, the deepest recesses of the soul.

Paul longed for his friends with the guts of Christ Jesus.

“Compassion.

Christ’s compassion.

That led Him to the cross.

That led Him to work the great reconciliation.

That leads Him to keep working the work of  
 salvation He has begun in us.

Paul’s point – Christ has given us all we need to live in unity.

He has given us all the resources of the Gospel  
 to live worthy of the Gospel.

The up-lifting support of Christ;  
 the tenderness of the love of Christ;  
 experiencing the friendship of the Spirit in Christ;  
 and the gut-wrenching compassion of Christ.

If such resources are made fully available to us  
 [immeasurably more! – Ephesians 3:20-21]  
 then why is it so hard to live in unity,  
 to live as a symphony making beautiful music?

#### **(4). Four – virus.**

Living as citizens of heaven on earth  
 is challenged by an insidious virus.

Chapter two, verses 3-4.

“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit.”

Bingo.

That is why the symphony in Philippi  
                   was not producing the joy of the Gospel.

That is why the church is not moving forward.

“Selfishness and empty conceit.”

Looking out for our own personal interests,  
                   and not the interests of others.

Some of you will remember the Jonestown disaster of 1978,  
                   when nearly 1,000 people died of poisoning  
                   under cult leader Jim Jones.

About a week after the tragedy,  
                   the Los Angeles Times printed a “political cartoon,”  
                   entitled “The New American Cult.”

It depicted a pyramid  
                   with four levels.

In each level was printed a pronoun.

I  
 Me  
 Mine  
 Myself

The cult of the ego.

That is what was at work in the church at Philippi.

The deeply rooted tendency of the human soul  
                   to make ourselves the centre of the world.

Children do it because they do not know any better.

But adults are supposed to grow out of childhood.

The virus eating away in the congregation in Philippi  
                   is the need to have things our way;  
                   the need to have our needs met first;  
                   the need to always be right,  
                   and for others to say we are right.

Paul calls it  
                   “selfishness and empty conceit.”

The cult of the ego will bring down any “polis,”  
as we are seeing all over the world.

It brought down the Roman-polis.  
It is brings down any polis centered  
around the self at the centre.

But again, thankfully, Paul does not leave it at that.

He goes on.

And takes us into the heart of the Gospel.

### **(5). Five – antidote.**

Living as citizens of heaven on earth is possible  
because of the strong antidote to the virus.

A radically transformed attitude.

2:3-4 –

“... but with humility of mind  
regard one another as more important than yourselves;  
do not merely look out for your own  
personal interests,  
but also for the interests of others.”

The only cure against the virus of selfishness and empty conceit  
is to cultivate and practice “humility of mind.”

A humility before God  
which fosters a humility before others.

We are talking miracle.

I find myself using that word a lot lately!

Because living the fully human, fully alive life takes a miracle.

And the Gospel works the miracle.

When the Gospel gets a hold of us,  
it transforms our ingrained inclination  
to have it our way.

The Gospel frees us from competing for our own interests,  
and empowers us to compete for the well-being of others.



So we come to where we started this morning,  
back to the most important exhortation in the letter.

Chapter 2, verse 5 –

**“Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus.”**

The only way to live in “humility of mind,”  
is to live in the mind which was and is in Christ Jesus.

The only way to live worthy of the Gospel of Christ Jesus  
is to live in “humility of mind,”  
and the only way to live in “humility of mind,”  
is to have the mind of Christ Jesus.

The mind revealed in the early Christian hymn in 2:5-11.

“Who, being in the form of God,  
did not consider equality with God  
as something to be exploited,  
but emptied Himself,  
taking the form of a slave.”

“He did not consider.”

Do you hear and see that phrase?

“He did not consider.”

“He did not consider.”

The picture the hymn paints  
is of Jesus Christ in His pre-existent state  
contemplating what it means to be in the form of God.

From all eternity He has existed in the form of God, as God.

From all eternity He has been equal with God.

He the eternal Son has been equal with the Father.

The hymn suggests that in His pre-existent state,  
the eternal Son is contemplating what it all means.

And He comes to a conclusion which none of us  
would have ever reached.

He concludes that to be in the form of God,  
to be equal with the Father,

means not exploiting His status for His own good,  
 but emptying Himself,  
 taking the form of a servant.

Every time I say these words I shake my head in wonder!

He Who has always been in the form of God;  
 He Who has always be equal with God;  
 concludes that the best way to be God  
 is to empty Himself  
 and take the form of a servant!

The eternal Son of God, God the Son,  
 choses to become a human being,  
 and as a human being  
 live the live of a house-hold slave,  
 because He concludes this is the most natural way  
 to express what it means to be in the form of God,  
 the most natural way to express  
 what it means to be equal with God.

In becoming a human being,  
 the eternal Son  
 does not give up the form of God.

That is impossible.

In becoming a human being,  
 the eternal Son  
 does not give up equality with God.

That too is impossible.

Rather in becoming a human being,  
 and living the life of a house-hold slave,  
 He is revealing the nature and character of God.

He did not “lay aside His glory.”

He expressed His glory!

Becoming a servant,  
 and placing Himself wholly at the disposal  
 of His Father and of the human race,  
 most gloriously manifests His glory.

God thinks that being God  
 means emptying Himself for the life of the world.

And that is why Jesus is exalted to the highest place  
and given the name above every name.

The name *Kurios*, Lord.

The name by which Caesar was being called.

As the sovereign of the land.

The name by which the Living God chooses to be called.

*Kurios* is the Greek for the Hebrew *Adonai*,  
*my lord*.

Which is the substitute,  
the circumlocution for *Yahweh*.

Jesus the self-emptying servant  
is exalted to the highest place  
and given the name above every name.

For in emptying Himself in servant love  
He has demonstrated  
that He knows what it means to be *Kurios*.

He is not given the name because He is exalted.

He is given the name  
because in laying down His life for the world  
He has once and for all  
shown the world what it means to be God.

He is not given the Name because He “went up.”

He is given the Name because it “went down.”

Down, down, down.

And thereby revealed the glory of His Father!

**“Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus.”**

Listen to how one theologian  
expresses the wonder of this mind.

“In world such as ours and Paul’s  
where power is manifested in self-assertion,  
acquisition, and domination,

Christ reveals that God's power,  
indeed the triune nature,  
is made known to the world  
in the act of self-emptying."

Then this:

"Self-emptying is not so much a single act  
as the fundamental disposition of the eternal  
relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus  
become the decisive revelation to us of  
that 'self-emptying' that eternally  
characterizes the triune life of God."  
[Stephen Fowls, *Philippians*, 97].

Living worthy of the Gospel of Christ  
means adopting and practicing the mind of Christ.

It means realizing that we have been created in the image  
of an amazingly different kind of God  
the world has ever known.

Realizing, therefore,  
that "selfishness and empty conceit,"  
are a violation of who we were created to be.

Realizing, therefore,  
that the only way to be fully functioning human beings,  
is to empty ourselves,  
living as servants,  
seeking the best interests of others.

Servants of the Servant God,  
who do whatever it takes  
that others might flourish.

I think it is the fundamental exhortation in the Bible:

**"Let the same mind be you that was and is in Christ Jesus."**

Live it, and everything else falls into place.

The question is:

Are we, who name the name of Jesus  
living worthy of His gospel?

Are we relating to one another out of "humility of mind"?

Are we striving together, intent on one purpose?

Are we moving together in one spirit and in one mind?

Can we stand before the world, and say,  
“We are living the way Jesus wants us to live?”

Do our universities see in our fellowships  
the glory of God?

The self-emptying love that is the glory of God?

So, of course, Paul goes on to exhort us to  
“work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”

Salvation is being brought into  
relationship with  
a very different kind of God anyone has ever known.

Salvation is being conformed into  
the image of this very different kind of God.

It is when we live with and in this God  
that we shine as lights in the world.

So, this morning,  
let us confess anything that is keeping us from  
living worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

Any bitterness.

Resentment.

Anger.

Suspicion.

Any demand that the fellowship be what we want it to be.

Any judgment of others.

Any pride that says we are better than the other.

And let us, as never before, ask Jesus Christ to give us His mind.

His incredibly beautiful mind.