

Sermon Series: Philippians -- Good News

April 13, 2014

Title: The Jesus Mindset

Text: Philippians 4:1-9

Summary: Jesus came to Jerusalem as God's King. So how would he make his entrance? The answer to that question points the way to how we are called to live in this world. Call it the Jesus Mindset.

High Horse or Donkey?

Palm Sunday, A.D. 30:

Early on a Sunday morning in April of the year A.D. 30 a rabbi named Jesus sent two of his students to find him a ride into Jerusalem. Today he would make known to both his own people and the Romans who ruled them that God's true King had come to introduce God's own rule in the world. His entrance would be a royal one.

So what to ride into town? Rome's emperors liked to portray themselves or their royal sons on horseback. King Solomon had ridden his father David's royal mule when he came to Jerusalem to be crowned as king. What would God's own Son ride into the royal city?

We all know how Jesus came into town that Sunday morning:

John 12:14-15 NIV

Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written:

**“Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion;
see, your king is coming,
seated on a donkey’s colt.”**

His choice of mount fulfilled an ancient prophecy concerning the coming of God's King. But it also said a whole lot about the King who rode the colt. Anyone remembering the original prophecy would have known that it read:

Zechariah 9:9-10 NIV

**Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion!
Shout, Daughter Jerusalem!**

**See, your king comes to you,
righteous and victorious,**

**lowly and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.**

**I will take away the chariots from Ephraim
and the warhorses from Jerusalem,
and the battle bow will be broken.**

**He will proclaim peace to the nations.
His rule will extend from sea to sea
and from the River to the ends of the earth.**

Here was a King who brought peace not through chariots, warhorses or battle bows, but by riding like a poor man on a young donkey!

The Jesus' Mindset:

How well this kingly procession fits with the poem Paul included in his letter to the church in Philippi. The great King -- God's Son from eternity -- humbled himself, taking on the form of a slave, and then submitted to a criminal's death for crimes he had never committed.

The ancient prophecy which Jesus enacted describes the king on the donkey as "ani", the Hebrew word that means, 'poor,' 'needy,' 'afflicted,' and 'humble.' Paul calls this humility the Jesus Mindset:

Philippians 2:3-5 NIV

Do nothing out of vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Your attitude [mindset] should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

Humility, being willing to be poor, needy, afflicted, the least powerful in the group -- this is all part of the Jesus Mindset. This is the model He set for us as we journey into God's New Creation and as we become renewed in His Life and love.

Euodia and Syntyche:

It turns out that at least two people in the church in Philippi very much needed to learn to live the Jesus Mindset.

We don't know how it started. Two women, one named Euodia, and the other named Syntyche, had been key figures in the little church in Philippi. Perhaps they had been

part of the women's prayer group that Paul and his team encountered by the river outside of town. They had struggled right alongside Paul for the Good News. But then something happened.

Somehow their relationship went cold. It probably didn't happen all at once. A little offense that was never mended? A seed of jealousy that grew up into envy and resentment? A misunderstanding that turned into a stand-off? A power struggle for position and influence in a growing church?

By the time Paul sat down to write his letter to the Philippians the fight between Euodia and Syntyche had become so much of a distraction that it threatened the entire church family. No doubt people had taken sides, had stopped talking with each other, or tried to tiptoe in a dangerous middle ground. Before he finishes his letter he addresses the problem head on:

Philippians 4:2-3 NIV

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Paul doesn't bother to rehash the old hurts or litigate between the combatants. Instead, he points the way forward into the New Life that God has for the two women and their community. Look again at his personal appeal to them:

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

There it is -- the Jesus Mindset. This new attitude and new way of thinking is the only way forward. There is no place for riding a high horse into church. Somebody has to go find a donkey.

Exhale!

The Lord is near!

So how do we discover and live out the Jesus Mindset?

It begins with realizing that Jesus is here right now, living His New Life in us. Paul puts it this way:

Philippians 4:4-5 NIV

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

The same King who chose to come into His realm riding on a donkey is coming into each and every day. And the same gentleness and humility that He expressed when He came to Jerusalem is the hallmark of His Mindset in our lives:

"Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near."

We've all heard the expression and seen the bracelets that ask the question: WWJD? "What would Jesus do?" Perhaps a better question would be: "What will I do with Jesus right here beside me?"

Breathe Out!

Dig beneath the hostility and selfishness of the old world we live in and you will eventually come across fear in one of its many forms. No wonder, then, that Paul moves on to address the presence of fear in our lives as the great impediment to the Jesus Mindset:

Philippians 4:6 NIV

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Think about what you have to do before you can breathe in a breath of fresh air: You have to breathe out the old, stale, CO₂-laden air that is in your lungs. If you don't, there won't be any room for the new, O₂-laden air that keeps you alive. Well, the same is true when it comes to living the Jesus Mindset. The old, polluted thoughts and fears must be "breathed out" in order for the Jesus Mindset to come in.

And how do we do this spiritual "breathing out"? We breathe out our fears, hurts, worries and doubts to the One who created us in the first place. He is more than able to absorb the confusion, the dread and the injustice of this world. After all, that's what He did through Jesus on the Cross. As Peter writes:

1 Peter 5:7 NIV

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Guarded by God's Peace:

Paul says that when we breathe out our anxieties and fears -- when we express them, confess them to God in the daring belief that He will protect us -- the Jesus Mindset comes to life in us:

Philippians 4:7 NIV

And the peace of God which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Instead of trying to "guard our hearts and minds" through finding things to worry about, we let God run the Universe. When we do, we discover the peace of mind and heart that we can never fully understand or express in the language and thoughts of this old world.

It's like waking up with a strange unexplained pain in your abdomen. When it doesn't go away, you head to the internet and discover all sorts of things that could be causing it, none of them very encouraging. That night you lie in bed imagining yourself dying of cancer, suffering from an obstructed bowel or slipping into full-blown appendicitis. Finally, you decide to face this horrible tragedy head on: You call the doctor. A few hours and a few tests later she gives you the good news: It's the flu! All you had to do was stop trying to worry yourself out of your predicament and "cast your cares" on your doctor!

The Jesus Mindset requires breathing out our anxiety so that His peace can take over.

Breathe In!

Fresh air:

We breathe out *so that we can breathe in*. Paul writes that after "breathing out" our anxieties, we are to breathe in the pure air of the Jesus Mindset:

Philippians 4:7 NIV

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things.

Did you ever try to think "happy thoughts" when your mind was racing with worries or focused on past hurts? You can't do it. The old poison thoughts crowd everything else out. But when you've breathed out those stale and deadly thoughts and fears, then you can breathe in the kinds of things that fit the Jesus Mindset.

Note: This is a choice! Only you can decide whether to re-poison your spiritual lungs or find the clean air of Heaven to breathe. When we're preoccupied with anxiety and worry, our minds go looking for negative things to think about. But when we've given those worries over to God, His peace gives us the opportunity to welcome His perspective into our minds and hearts: Things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and worthy of praise.

Praxis:

Paul sums up this conversation about the Jesus Mindset with some very practical advice:

Philippians 4:9 NIV

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me -- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

As a church, the Philippian believers knew Paul's story. They knew how he had come to town, been wrongfully beaten and thrown into jail, all for the supposed crime of announcing the Good News. But they also knew what he and Silas did in the midst of the injustice and pain. In the middle of the night, locked in the darkest dungeon of the prison, they had chosen to -- of all things -- sing the psalms of God and His goodness. They had chosen to "breathe out" their worries and anger, trusting that God would take care of them. They had chosen to thank God for His love and care, right in the middle of their imprisonment. And they had chosen to fill their hearts and minds with things that were true, noble, pure and lovely.

This wasn't some sort of self-help mind game. This was the living of a relationship with the God who made them and the Lord Jesus who had conquered Death.

Now Paul challenges his readers to take what they have learned and put it into practice. He uses the word from which we get the term *praxis*. *Praxis* means the process by which a theory, lesson or skill is lived out in real life. It is something that only comes from *practice*. And it is always *practical*.

The Jesus Mindset is no theory. The Jesus Mindset put Jesus Himself on a donkey instead of a charger. It gave Him the courage to walk to Calvary 5 days later, filled with the trust that His Father would set Him free from Death. In the Garden of Gethsemane we read that Jesus prayed fervently -- pouring out His terror to His Father. What was He doing? He was breathing out, so that He could breathe in the love and forgiveness He would need in the next wrenching hours.

And now the Jesus Mindset is here for you and me. All you have to do is learn to breathe!