

## “Like-minded” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Palm Sunday – March 24, 2024

- I. **Philippians 2:5** – “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus”
- II. **Is it possible to teach an old dog new tricks?**
  - a. Back in 1523, right around the same time that Martin Luther started the Reformation, an English animal trainer named John Fitzherbert said, “The dog must be trained when he is a whelp, or else it will not be [trained]; for it is hard to make an old dog [find a new scent].”
    - i. Today, we’ve summarized his thought into the old saying: “You can’t teach an old dog new tricks.”
  - b. Is this saying really true, and is it reasonable to apply it to people?
    - i. Well, the TV show called Mythbusters did an episode on this topic and concluded that older dogs can learn new tricks with no problem.... myth busted...
  - c. Now, if an old dog can learn a new trick, how about us?
    - i. I’m sure you’ve heard it many times, but we talk about strong-willed people, or stubborn people, or people set in their ways... and we say, “well, ya can’t teach an old dog new tricks...” meaning they cannot change.
    - ii. The Bible has other ideas about attitudes, change, and mind-sets.
- III. **Paul tells the church in Philippi to have the same mind as Jesus.**
  - a. I suppose it seems good that we hear the verses leading up to verse 5, because it fills us in on the thought process of Paul: “<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others,” (Philippians 2:3-4).
  - b. Then, as our reading begins today, he tells us to, “have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” (vs 5)
  - c. Then Paul goes on to say, but you can’t teach an old dog new tricks, so don’t bother... not!
    - i. The whole premise of these verses and all the New Testament is that God is able to transform and renew the mind, alter attitudes and desires, and change the hearts of people to be a reflection of Him!
  - d. Sure, there are people who have no faith in Jesus who are described by Paul as “dead in their trespasses” – and they might be unwilling or limited in how much they can change...
  - e. Yet, for the believer in Christ, Paul says a new person has emerged who is “being transformed into the same image” [of God] (2 Corinthians 3:18).
    - i. And again, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)
    - ii. And in Colossians 3:10, “[You] have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.”

1. I want to bring your attention to “being renewed”, because that means we are in an ongoing process of change.
  - f. When we don’t believe people of faith can change, we don’t believe God.
- IV. **It is true, we are old, sinful dogs... but we can change.**
- a. Every person who has faith in Jesus puts on a new self and can tap into Christ’s wisdom and understanding for their lives.
  - b. We are tempted to believe that change is impossible – or that some people will always be stuck in their mind-set.
  - c. Over and over again, God shows us that Jesus can change anything... or anyone.
  - d. When Paul says, “have this mind,” the word mind is similar to the word for wisdom... so we might say, “have this wisdom among yourselves.”
    - i. The difference in the “mind” Paul uses here is that it has more of a sense of action... or putting it into practice.
      1. In other words, as Jesus was humble and gave up His life in service, be of the same mind... be like-minded and do what He did!
  - e. Our sinful nature doesn’t want to change or be like Jesus, but that is absolutely possible by His grace through our faith.
    - i. We are reminded in Galatians 2:20, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”
- V. **The most important part of this story is not us**, but what Jesus did for us.
- a. The only way we can be like-minded with Jesus is by His sacrifice...
  - b. In humility and love... Jesus heard the roar of the crowds welcoming Him into Jerusalem, all the while knowing that they would send Him to the cross just a few days later.
    - i. The prophecy from Zechariah 500 years prior to Jesus told of the King coming into Jerusalem on a donkey, celebrated as the Savior.
    - ii. The problem was that the crowd, as excited as they were, did not see Jesus for who He really was – and their mindset was focused on an earthly ruler to save them from the Romans – Jesus proved to be far more... because He became a sacrifice for their sins... and ours.
  - c. Only the mindset of Christ Jesus matters, and that was to humbly do the Father’s will...
    - i. The journey to the cross had begun, and our Savior would empty Himself by dying on Calvary, in order fill us with faith.
- VI. **We can change to be more like-minded with Christ.**
- a. If we take anything with us to begin this Holy Week, let it be the mind of Christ and His humility and service.
  - b. We might consider ourselves set in our ways, but God is always at work to change and teach us...

- i. Like the mind of Jesus, we can look to the needs of others in the family... in the workplace... in the classroom... and even in the political arena.
  - ii. Like the mind of Jesus, we can love others not with a self-seeking love, but with the love of God in Christ Jesus.
  - iii. Like the mind of Jesus, we can be humble and walk in the Father's will, seeking what's best for the kingdom and God's glory.
- c. Yes, as believers, we can learn new tricks... and that means we can be like-minded with our Savior.
  - i. May God's grace go with each of us as we mark this most Holy Week with the mindset of Jesus, our Servant King... and the one who gave up His life to forgive us and make us His own. Amen.