

Sermon - Psalm 107:1-3,33-43 John 3:11-21 Philippians 2:1-11

The Mind of Christ Before the Matters of the World March 15, 2009

The psalm that was read this morning, psalm 107, is titled - Thanksgiving for deliverance from many troubles. Not a bad choice at all for our times. But a hard choice for his time. A society, a nation in ruin. Facing the huge task of rebuilding - still the psalmist praises God as the one who delivers God's people from every peril, from desert wastes and hunger, from prison, from the consequences of silly, and sad, and sinful decisions, from natural disasters and diseases...

God's love, he declares, is greater than our most desperate needs or troubles or difficulties. If God can turn a desert into pools of water, then God who loves us so much is able to guide us from desperation to deliverance, from great losses to new victories, from fear to new found faith in our future. But how can we latch onto the lifeline the Bible in so many places says is there for us?

How will we find the faith that will help to change the way we see all things? And so help us see all things with the vision God gives us in Christ? Help us to see that beyond the mess and misery of this troubling time, that God's promises are good, and that the mind of Christ can lift us and move us beyond the messy matter of the world? Please pray with me.

Lord, let us feel your spirit moving, let us hear your words spoken. Let us be a people moved to believe in you more deeply by your presence with us, and call us into your world as bearer of the light and hope we've seen in Christ to this dark time. Amen.

O give thanks to the Lord, for God is Good. Let the redeemed say so. God so loved the world that God gave God's only son.... Be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

Three passages from Scripture – and all three I think – echo the great commandment - you shall love the Lord your God.... And these three passages speak to the heart of our faith, our hope for this world and our hope for more than this world can ever offer.

Give thanks to God - God so loved the World - Let the mind of Christ be in us. Three passages that are my best hope, our best for this world and more.... Our best hope and comfort in the face of the troubles of this world... And the ultimate defeat we face in all the matters of this world,

In the words of scripture we read, I find help to see beyond, hope beyond, the limitations and weaknesses that cause us, all of us, such times of pain and loss. And we feel the pain, pain in our lives as jobs disappear and health concerns appear, and tragedy strikes home in random shootings, and, as if more bad news were better, new evidence is shared of greed and corruption among our leaders.

The matters of this world can scatter and scuttle our hope and happiness. But – the heart of our faith is about our relationship to God and to God's Goodness to us in Christ... who over came the world and invites us to share in his victory.

We just have to move forward in such faith.... Except – we are a bit like the old question of the difference between an optimist and a pessimist. An optimist is really just a pessimist who hasn't heard the latest bad news.

Which may explain why there aren't too many optimists around right now - Bad news just keeps coming. Out of Iraq – a new President says - only to send the troops to Afghanistan. A new day in Washington, except a Spending bill gets signed with more earmarks, special interest projects, bridges to no where, than ever before. And the report is 90,000 die each year from hospital infected patients - Maybe national health improvement before national care?

Messy matters of the world. And where in all the bad news is the good news of how we bring to life, to our living. Not the mess of these matters, but the Word of Christ? How in the face of the bad news we see and hear, and all too often feel in our own personal lives, how can we let the mind of Christ come before these matters of the world?

The world is so much with us, affects us so powerfully. Even the old saying – mind over matter – seems hallow. The air we breathe, the water we drink, if their polluted, no matter what we think, matter matters more than whatever we think.

Except – Except – Except - Thank you, Apostle Paul. Blinded in his own life by the truth of God's power, so he could see that truth in the life of Christ. Thank you Paul, for reminding us of Jesus Christ – who submitted to death on a cross, was dead and buried, and rose on the third day – and sealed to us the truth that mind rules over matter.

The mind, the moving power of God in life, is greater than the powers at work in our life and death. And the hints at the possible truth of this central trust of our faith – keep popping up.

That mind and heart and soul bear more impact in our lives than all the matters that would trouble our lives if we let them. Scientists, skeptical scientists of little faith at best, Keep trying to unprove the findings – Reported again -

That people of faith heal faster than others, and that even people without faith when prayed for healed faster. Mind over matter.

And I had a hint of the truth of this truth - of what the mind can do, when I was about 9. I'd been a preacher's kid again – in trouble for something, and my old school Dad wasn't about to spoil his child by sparing the rod. And I was spanked.

But – I had a friend who told me if I thought of something I really liked a spanking wouldn't hurt so much – and I found out he was right - and it was the end of my fear of physical punishment. Mind over matter. Sadly – my Dad got the message that I had a new attitude – and so he moved on to other ways to help his preacher's kid grow up.

But the lesson was learned. Mind over matter. It is the heart of every victory of addictions in our lives..... to food, or drugs or other harmful patterns of behavior. Our minds must be transformed – by counseling, by knowing ourselves better, by 12 step programs of re-programming our mis-wired systems, that leads to freedom from addictions.

It is this same mind over matter truth and power, that empowers people to change not only their own behavior, but the behavior of others too. We are less than 50 years from the I Have a Dream speech by Martin Luther King, Jr. And though prejudice and discrimination plague us still, a seismic shift has taken place in our lives with President Obama's election. The power of an idea - color blindness - mind over matter.

Recently I heard on two different tv talk shows the same advice given to young people considering marriage. The advice? Don't get married. Go live your own life for awhile – experiment with relationships - try things out. See what pleases you, what you like most. About the only thing I didn't hear – was kick the tires.

And so we have now less marriage, more living together, and still more divorce, more single parent homes, more abuse, less clear role modeling

And that's the matter, the chatter, the counsel of our world - and I think that's what's the matter – with much in our messier and messier world. What's the matter at the core of many issues that plague our society and our happiness.

And Jesus said - A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and the two shall become one.

Not – the matter of letting my instincts, my desires of the moment, my drives, my passions, No - The mind of Christ over the matters of the world.... The Godly way of being guided and disciplined, and governed by a word and way of living – good for me and for the best of living possible for all of us.

Driven in my living, not by my wants and needs and desires first, my personal matters mattering too much. But driven by the mind of Christ... because – as brilliant as we think we are – we are not so very good on our own - as this current world crisis has shown.

Selfishness, self-centered greedy persons need a community of faith grounded in God's word, to help guide and direct our living. And this was the startling confession, or admission, recently, of one of the leading atheists in the world. He wrote - Africa needs God.

Revisiting Africa after many years, and seeing what was happening across the continent, He wrote belief in God, Christian Belief in God, is the most powerful force for good in Africa. Such belief he says, moves people not only to change their own personal lives, but to bring changes in the lives of their communities -

It is why the work of Juna Amgora and Ben and Lillian is so important - so vital to the future of Uganda - It is why my family has such a stake in mission efforts will be going to Africa again in April.....

And its why this Church has made this a priority of its life and ministry here - That what we do will bring the mind of Christ to our community. And to our area, and far beyond. It is our hope - yes - mind over matter.

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete, be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.... Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.

For more peace of mind, for more unity of spirit, for a greater sense of Hope and promise in each of our lives – and the life of the community and world in which we live - Put the mind of Christ before the matters of the world.

Amen.

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