

The Mind of Christ Mark 15:1-39; Philippians 2:5-11
Saint Marks UMC Good Friday (March 25) 2016

¹ And as soon as it was morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council. And they bound Jesus and led him away and delivered him over to Pilate. ² And Pilate asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" And he answered him, "**You have said so.**" ³ And the chief priests accused him of many things. ⁴ And Pilate again asked him, "Have you no answer to make? See how many charges they bring against you." ⁵ But Jesus made no further answer, so that Pilate was amazed.

⁶ Now at the feast he used to release for them one prisoner for whom they asked. ⁷ And among the rebels in prison, who had committed murder in the insurrection, there was a man called Barabbas. ⁸ And the crowd came up and began to ask Pilate to do as he usually did for them. ⁹ And he answered them, saying, "Do you want me to release for you the King of the Jews?" ¹⁰ For he perceived that it was out of envy that the chief priests had delivered him up. ¹¹ But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have him release for them Barabbas instead. ¹² And Pilate again said to them, "Then what shall I do with the man you call the King of the Jews?" ¹³ And they cried out again, "Crucify him." ¹⁴ And Pilate said to them, "Why, what evil has he done?" But they shouted all the more, "Crucify him." ¹⁵ So Pilate, wishing to satisfy the crowd, released for them Barabbas, and having scourged^[a] Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.

¹⁶ And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor's headquarters),^[b] and they called together the whole battalion.^[c] ¹⁷ And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. ¹⁸ And they began to salute him, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ¹⁹ And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. ²⁰ And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

²¹ And they compelled a passerby, Simon of Cyrene, who was coming in from the country, the father of Alexander and Rufus, to carry his cross. ²² And they brought him to the place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull). ²³ And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh, but he did not take it. ²⁴ And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. ////

²⁵ And it was the third hour^[d] when they crucified him. ²⁶ And the inscription of the charge against him read, "The King of the Jews." ²⁷ And with him they crucified two robbers, one on his right and one on his left.^[e] ²⁹ And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, ³⁰ save yourself,

and come down from the cross!”³¹ So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked him to one another, saying, “He saved others; he cannot save himself.”³² Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe.” Those who were crucified with him also reviled him.

³³ And when the sixth hour^[f] had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.^[g] ³⁴ And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”³⁵ And some of the bystanders hearing it said, “Behold, he is calling Elijah.”³⁶ And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.”³⁷ And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.³⁸ And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.³⁹ And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he^[h] breathed his last, he said, “Truly this man was the Son^[i] of God!” ////

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

As part of my spiritual journey this week, I have been trying to put myself into the shoes Jesus wore during Holy Week – coming down the hill with people singing out, in harmony with the singing rocks: “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord! Hosanna!”

That felt good to be astride that little donkey, just like the animal that King David rode – being praised. Being honored. But in the back of my mind, I knew what every leader of a people knows: they are fickle; they can turn on a dime. Don’t base my value on their adulation.

In my mind’s eye, I was teaching in the Temple – the place where – for hundreds of years – God was believed to make his home, in a box/an ark carried by two long poles, upon the shoulders of faithful servants. I pictured myself teaching in the shadows of the prophets, carrying on the tradition. And then, I felt the anger well up within me – righteous anger – for how “they” had soiled the House of God; how they had worshipped the institution of the Church more than the foundation upon which it was built. And I was able to imagine just how Jesus felt the day he overturned the tables and drove out the merchants

And I pictured myself, in the evening, taking rest in the home of my friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. I let my hair down there in their little house, and had a good time with these beloved friends ... but always in the back of my mind was the nagging reality of what was going to come, AND how we all were going to have our hearts broken, of how our relationship was going to be forever changed. It was good to have a place to go, to relax, to be refreshed, to luxuriate in the lavish friendship of true friends.

I remember specifically waking up on Wednesday of this week, and hearing the birds calling one another outside my open window. And I remembered Jesus' words: **"Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."**

And my mind began to wander over just how Jesus must have felt that day – knowing that it would be his last "normal" day. But how can a day be "normal" when you know that at its ending your death walk will begin in earnest? It's like being on death row. You hold onto every single moment for as long as you can; paying attention to the smallest of details – like the birds singing, the color of the sky and the shape of the clouds, the fragrance of the new flowers blooming, the cool wet drops of rain upon your upturned face. The day itself is alive!

To have the mind of Jesus has been one thing. But our scripture – used for the call to worship – from a letter that Paul wrote to the Church in Philippi – a scripture that is called "the Christ Hymn" – that scripture calls us to have the MIND OF CHRIST.

So often, we have carelessly said the name JESUS CHRIST as though it is a FIRST and a LAST name. Like:

- Monty + Brown.
- Tom + Minshall.
- Janet + Harman

But it's really closer to make the comparison:

- Monty + Pastor
- Tom + organist
- Janet + Deacon

CHRIST was/is/shall ever more be the OFFICE that Jesus filled. It is not just a lifetime position, unless one calls that lifetime as being eternal.

CHRIST has been around ever since God revealed Himself in the beginning of creation.

WHAT Jesus the Christ did on Good Friday had COSMIC consequences.

When Jesus was nailed to the cross, there was a hinge in the universe that opened a doorway that has never been closed again, regardless of how much the sinfulness of humanity has attempted to slam it shut again.

The driving of those nails through those sacred fully human hands and feet, was the aligning of the tumblers in the lock that had been shut when Adam and Eve exited Eden.

Adam and Eve had been created in God's image, and they tried to usurp equality with God, by snatching what was not theirs – the knowledge of judgment, sorting out good and evil. And the human creature has been in toil eating of that judgment-making thicket and thistles ever since, hardly ever being able to look at, or experience, anything in life for what it simply is, without resisting, judging, analyzing, and labeling it. All because those first creatures wanted to GRASP EQUALITY with God – a task for which they were not capable of doing right. They wanted to live forever.

But, on Good Friday, another human who WAS equal with God – fully equal within the community of the Trinity – did not GRASP at that equality. Indeed he opened his hands and let that equality slide down and fall to the ground. He was willing to let go, and to be emptied, and TO DIE ...

And the results were COSMIC! The tumblers indeed fell into place opening the door of eternal life that would never again be closed. Death, once tasted by the Immortal one, could never again reign.

It's not just the mind of the suffering Jesus on the cross that we are told to have; it was the mind of the COSMIC CHRIST that we are told to have.

And that mind is not JUST one of gratitude for what went on this day.

The mind of Christ is one that was willing to be emptied – spilled out WITHOUT HAVING CONTROL OVER THE RESULTS – in order for God to

As I tried to have the mind of Jesus on this day, I was reminded of the mantra spoken by Lakota warriors on the day of battle: "Today would be a good day to die." they would say to themselves and to their comrades in arms.

But to have the mind of Christ is to subject oneself to the pain of the day AND doing all of the verbs in verses 5-8 of the Christ Hymn: **emptying, being obedient, suffering, suffering even death on a cross**. And then the verses 9-11 are all the work of God, without steering from below: **exalting, lifting high, giving a name above all names**.

I've tried. I've tried to have the mind of Christ – but I'm not any better able to do it than were Adam and Eve.

I've got to quit TRYING and I've got to LET GOD DO IT.

TODAY is the absolute hinge of history – where LETTING GO becomes the ultimate EMPOWERMENT.

Here's the kicker. What Jesus did on this day had COSMIC results – reaching down through the years, streaming like light in through the windows in the wall of this chapel – to reach us, to touch us, and to heal us. When we let go and receive and quit trying.

And SO, TOO, is COSMIC the result of OUR letting go. AS those saints in these windows portray the sinning saints through whom the power has been vesseled, so too is the cosmic power that God will unleash through your life and mine, when we also let go and have the mind of Christ.

When Jesus said “pick up your own cross and follow” a cross is a heavy thing. It cannot be carried with one hand, while holding onto your own stuff with the other. Two open hands are required.

Have the mind of Christ and be part of the COSMIC plan of salvation for all creation.

- Open your hands.
- Open your hearts.
- Open your minds.
- Let go of steering, controlling, attempting to be in charge.

Have the mind of Christ, that IS ALREADY IN YOU ... already there, just waiting to be released.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.