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 First Sun of Lent

Love—It Can Change Your Mind
Philippians 2:1-11

Let the ***same mind*** be in you that was in Christ Jesus....
 Jesus—who emptied himself as a servant, even though he was God,
 Jesus—who completely humbled himself, putting the whole world first

Is it possible for us to have the ***same mind as Jesus Christ?***
 When I see how we are almost trained to think of ourselves first from day one
 I have to wonder if this is a little like the rich man who turned away from Jesus when he
 asked how to get the kingdom and Jesus said go and sell all you have....it's easier for a
camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom.

But of course, afterwards, when the disciples were asking,
 How can it be possible for anyone to be with God?
 Jesus said, ***With God, all things are possible.***

So is it possible for us to have the same mind as Jesus Christ? You bet.
 We are called to have the same mind as Jesus Christ.

And Paul's word mind is far larger than just head knowledge,
 it means 'attitude, and way of life'.

And I don't know about you, but my life doesn't always conform to that of Christ.
 Human nature runs counter to that way of living.

To follow Christ takes a ***transformation*** of our minds.
 We don't naturally just live as humble servants.

So, I want you to think about this---what does it take to ***change your mind?***
 Does it work for someone to coerce you? Or debate you? Or educate you?
 What's the best way for someone to change your mind?

Picture for a moment the ***quintessential bachelor.***
 He is master of his domain, doing his own thing, on his own time, in his own way,
 You can't teach this old dog new tricks.
 I was listening to a woman talk about
 Her beloved **Pastor Ed**—the ultimate bachelor, a good preacher, but a little lacking in the
 pastoral care and compassion department....more about numbers, less about the people,
 very rigid in his schedule, very set in his ways at his desk and his home, always the same
 routine until.... all the sudden Pastor Ed is out visiting the sick, calling on more members,
 he was even late to the office on more than one occasion...his suits looked different, his hair
 changed, he was suddenly a chatty Cathy at potlucks. What changed I asked?
Her name is Jane she said. And they are getting married next month! He's a new man!

How many times have you seen someone completely changed when just the right person walks in, and they fall *in LOVE*.

Love completely changes his mind, her heart, their lives forever.

Or how about the 80 year old woman from the Deep South, raised in segregation, stuck in that mindset, until she joined a Methodist Disciple bible study and found herself sitting across the table from an African American woman.

She befriended the woman, and at her funeral this new African American friend spoke at her service about the *LOVE that had changed her mind*.

Has LOVE ever changed *your* mind?

LOVE is what changes everything. And it's at the heart of Philippians 2. The humility of Jesus Christ, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus— All of it is *self-giving LOVE*.

The Love of Jesus has the power to change minds, and change lives.

How does the love of Jesus change our minds?

For most of us it starts with a *stop*. We have to stop what we're doing.

Then we turn around (that's what repent literally means—to turn around).

Or Recalculate—in the language of good old GPS.

Then—if we allow it, Jesus offers us a *new direction* for our hearts and lives.

From deep within, where the Holy Spirit resides....

We start to focus on **WWJD**? What would Jesus do?

It can start with something as simple as hearing the story

Of the Good Samaritan, then asking ourselves where am I in the story?

Now how can I be a Good Samaritan in my life?

Once we start thinking like this,

We start to consider the *greater good*, not just ourselves,

Much like Martin Luther King Jr. called us to care about the 'beloved human family',

Where all people are one....we start to think beyond ourselves, and our little world.

Those people in the Pacific devastated in Japan by the earthquake and tsunami—

They are our brothers and sisters in the human family.

How might God call us to reach out to them?

Where in your own life right now is God calling you to think about the *greater good*?

Where can you lay down your own interests in the service of the *community*?

What would *Jesus do* in your shoes?

Paul is after all talking to a Christian community in Philippi, people that he loved,

He is urging us to be a community of people with transformed minds,

The mind of Christ. One mind.

Can you even imagine **what we could do together** if we were of one mind—
The mind of Christ?

I saw some of this transformed community on TV last week, of all places.
I was curious after seeing a commercial, so I tuned in to the new show “**Secret Millionaire**”.
In the show were some amazing people who certainly demonstrated the attitude and mind
of Christ...they were humbling and emptying themselves for others.

The show featured a soup kitchen run by two twin sisters—**The Love Kitchen**—ladies who
believe in the power of feeding and loving those in need.
The whole staff of the kitchen were a family,
some of them having been homeless themselves.

Then I saw other saints coming together to run a non-profit **music school** for
underprivileged kids, offering free lessons and use of instruments.
Incredibly, they coach many of these students to college scholarships.
They are changing lives every day.

The final feature was a woman and her family, with a passion to help seriously ill children,
by making over their bedrooms.
They create these ‘**special spaces**’ where the children who are suffering
can hopefully find solace, and enjoy themselves, right in the comfort of home.

It was inspiring and humbling to see all these special servants,
people who pour themselves out for others,
just a **small taste** of what our Lord Jesus did for the world,
in his life, death, and resurrection.

My prayer while I was watching was that the **attitude** being portrayed
Could be **contagious**—that having that mind of Christ,
That self-emptying gracious humility and servanthood,
Could catch on like wildfire.

The show was **meant** to highlight what the secret millionaire would give
Monetarily to the needy charities and non-profits.
What I **hope it did** was highlight the servants, and their ministries.

I’m similarly inspired by humble servants here **in this church**—
those who help others with cards, calls, visits, meals, time, talent, money, tutoring,
donations, and love.
We see the mind, the attitude of Christ at work here in our midst.

Can we be of the same mind as that of Christ Jesus?
I sure hope so.

We can’t just wish it would happen.
We have to **stop** what we’re doing, turn around if necessary,

And **focus** on Jesus himself.
 What **would Jesus do** in my shoes?

What does it mean for me to humble myself as a **servant**?
 To be a **Good Samaritan**? The one who stops at the side of the road?

The more we think on these things,
 The more that having the mind of Christ becomes just **second nature**.
 We do after all, have the **Holy Spirit** dwelling within us,
 And that Spirit enables us to do what seems impossible,
 Because with God all things are possible.

Possibilities bring us to this **First Sunday of Lent**.
 Lent is that 40 day time period before Easter, excluding Sundays,
 When we prepare our hearts for the resurrection.
 It's an annual time to really **examine** our lives,
 and ask whether we have our priorities straight, whether our relationship with God is right,
 where we are on our spiritual journey.

For some people this means **sacrifice**—giving something up for Lent.
 Some people fast from certain foods or meals. Or other habits or indulgences.
 Other people **take up** a new spiritual practice for Lent, such as joining one of our Lenten
 bible studies we are offering during these six weeks on Tuesday mornings and evenings.

It all started with **Ash Wednesday**, when we took communion,
 And received the sign of the cross on our foreheads with the ashes of last year's palm
 branches mixed with olive oil.
 And these simple words, *the past is behind you, God's future before you, go with Christ*.
 Then we took a small piece of paper and wrote down some sins, folded it up, and nailed it
 to this cross as a sign of our repentance and commitment to a new life.

If you **missed Ash Wednesday**, you can come forward after worship today and receive the
 ashes, as well as nailing your sins to the cross.

You can also come forward to work more on our **Lenten puzzle**,
 remembering that with each piece you connect,
 God is using **your mind**, your life, to create something beautiful.
 This is happening in your **own** life, and together in **our lives** as a community of faith.

Week after week, as we journey to the cross and the empty tomb together,
 Let us be of the same mind as Christ Jesus,(read Philippians 2:6-11).
 Amen.