

The Mindset of the Messiah

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[0 : 0 0] Well, let me just add to Neil's welcome. It's so lovely to see all of you here this beautiful Sunday afternoon as it is now. And thank you, Neil, for giving us some songs to sing this morning that really help us focus on the beautiful poem that sits at the heart of the passage that we're going to be looking at today. A poem that we've sung so much from already today. But we're not going to be able to rest today by simply focusing on the words of that poem and what they tell us about our Lord Jesus Christ, essential though that is. Because what we're going to find is that the verses around it are intensely practical for all of us. Because the verse that Neil started reading at says this, in your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. So we're given this poem as an illustration of the way in which our minds should be set. And so that's what we're going to spend a bit of our time thinking. And the title for my talk today is The Mindset of the Messiah. And I'd like us to read the whole passage we've got today, including the poem, and then we'll get stuck in. So let's look to Philippians chapter 1 verse 27 through to chapter 2 verse 11. It'll be on the screen, but if you want to look onto the Pew Bibles or have it on your phone, it would be good just to stick with us and make sure that I'm sticking with what is in the Bible and disregard anything if you think that it's not straight from there. So

Philippians 1 verse 27, whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had and now hear that I still have. Therefore, if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of others. In your relationships with one another have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore,

God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And I pray that God would speak something into the hearts and lives of each of us individually and help us collectively as a church as we read and as we consider this teaching this morning. So imagine my surprise as I discovered that at the heart of the passage that I was being given to speak on today lay the word that I'd been focusing on most, partly to the annoyance of my family, during my summer holiday. Because I'd been given a book by a colleague at work called Mindset, and it's here. And I found this a great book, and I've been reading it over recent weeks, and it's by Dr. Carol Dweck from the States, million copy bestseller, subtitled,

Changing the Way You Think to Fulfill Your Potential. And I know some of you are already thinking it's clearly some sort of, you know, airy-fairy claptrap. Well, actually, I think it's well worth a look. And you could indeed subtitle today's talk, Changing the Way We Think to Fulfill Our Potential. Because if we're going to have the same mindset as Jesus Christ, I think we're going to have to change the way we think.

And by doing so, we absolutely will be fulfilling our potential. Not quite how Carol Dweck was approaching this theme. Let me say a little about the book. It's based on the premise that many of us go through life with a very fixed mindset. We assume that there are certain things that we're just good at, and certain things that we're really bad at. Some things we can do, other things we can't do.

[5 : 37] And that that fixed mindset can often plague us and limit us in fulfilling our potential. And she shows lots and lots of examples of people whom she says don't have a fixed mindset, but they've learned to have a growth mindset. A growth mindset, something that we're teaching our children in schools right across the country. A mindset which says, don't assume you can't do something, but rather be up for the challenge. A growth mindset which says, you know, there's nothing impossible. And it's all about learning. Making mistakes are okay. And the thing to praise, particularly in children, is their effort rather than just what they actually achieve. I'm looking at one or two of the teachers who I'm sure are familiar with this. And I've been struck by some of the great examples that she gives of people who demonstrated through their mindset an incredible capacity for learning, often marked by generosity, by selflessness, by a desire to give to others, and who achieved great things through their mindset.

So I'm not diminishing the book by any way, in any way, shape, or form. But then having read it, I then come to a passage like this. And I then take a real step back as I reach chapter 2, verse 5, having thought for weeks about mindset, and see right in the middle of our passage, this challenge that in our relationships with one another, we're to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. And it's really caught me. What is it about the mindset of Christ Jesus?

That we see in this passage? And what is it about the mindset of Christ Jesus that we should display? If we are really to be the people that God wants us to be? If we are really to fulfill our potential?

And I ask myself, do I understand the mindset of Christ Jesus? And to what extent am I? To what extent are we demonstrating in our lives, in our interactions with one another, in our relationships, to what extent are we demonstrating the mindset of Christ Jesus?

That's what this morning is all about. The mindset of Christ Jesus and how we can demonstrate it in our own life. Now, there's a risk in the talk today. There is absolutely a risk that what we see in this challenge, in chapter 2, verse 5, having the same mindset as Christ Jesus, is that what we have to do is try and work really, really, really hard to be good.

[8 : 22] You can see that risk, can't you? Because we're going to look, or we are looking, we've sung already about the mindset of Christ Jesus. We've sung already about all that he did, as though he was so great, he descended and became so poor. And there's a risk that as we look at this, we think, right, okay, this is all about, this is all really tough, and it is tough, and this is about trying really hard. Well, and yes, there is real effort involved in this.

I think we see this in the passage that we have read, that this does take real effort, but this also takes a miracle. Let's be absolutely clear that this takes a miracle, if we're going to be people who have the same mindset as Jesus Christ. This takes what chapter 2, verse 1 says, it takes us being united with Christ. And I want to be clear about that before we go any further. This takes Jesus Christ coming in and doing a work in our lives, if we're ever going to have the same mindset as Jesus Christ. This involves us having really appreciated what Jesus did, and why he did it when he stepped from heaven into earth, and when he became the one who, when he became the one who was obedient to death, even death on a cross. This involves us appreciating that his death was for us, that he died to pay the price for our sins. This involves us placing our trust in Jesus. And this involves us being people who day by day will not so much struggle and strive to be good, but will seek to be followers of Jesus Christ. Will seek to be people who find themselves as worshippers of Jesus. Followers of Jesus, worshippers of Jesus, those who are transfixed by his beauty, by his greatness, and then increasingly through that will have his mind set. And I've been anxious today as I've been preparing for, or in recent days as I've been preparing for this, that we don't get so caught up in the practical application of this, that we lose sight of the beautiful picture of who Jesus is. And equally, that we don't focus only on this beautiful picture of who Jesus is, and lose sight of the necessity of the practical application of it in our own lives and relationships, because the two things are so intimately bound up together. And as I've been reflecting on it, and at times reflecting on it as I've walked the dog, I suppose I've just been praying that I would have, that I'd be living this out, and that I'd have a song to sing. I've worshipped to God as well, because it just feels

to me that these verses ought to lead us to worship. And the song that came to me as I was walking the dog most recently, and you'll be pleased to know I will not sing it to you. But as we just get into verses 6 to 11, first of all, was just this, O Lord, you're beautiful. Your face is all I seek. And when your eyes are on this child, your grace abounds in me. So let's read, let's look at verses 6 to 11 again together, and let's see the beauty of Jesus Christ, the beauty of the Lord, and let's seek his face, because when his eyes are on us, his grace will abound in us. I've got four words for you that I hope might help capture some of what is in this little poem in verses 6 to 11. Four words that I think will convey something, though far from everything, about Jesus as revealed here. First of all, divine and dependent.

And secondly, serving and sacrificing. So firstly, divine and yet dependent. Those are the first two words. What's absolutely clear from this is that Jesus always knew exactly who he was. Verse 6, being in very nature God. He always was God. And as we read through this passage, he always will be God. But he did not see his being in very nature God, something that was to be used for his own advantage. It wasn't a cause for boasting or arrogance. Rather, he was willing, as verse 7 says, to make himself nothing. But even as he made himself nothing, even as he became fully human, he remained fully God. Really important teaching here about who Jesus is. And throughout his life here, even as he showed such humility, even as he served and sacrificed, he retained a really clear sense of his own identity. Jesus always knew who he was. He always knew where he was going. As verses 10 and 11 say, one day every knee will bow before Jesus Christ. And Jesus knew that as he was here on earth.

Let me just give you a few examples from the Gospels, where Jesus makes his knowledge of his identity so clear. John 14, he says, anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. John 8, he says, I am the light of the world. In Mark 13, he says, everyone will see the Son of Man come on the clouds with great glory.

[14:02] So he absolutely knew who he was. He was in constant communication with the Father. And yet, despite knowing who he was, knowing who he was and being God, he also showed a remarkable dependence on God when here on earth as a human. In John 5, he says that he can do nothing without the Father. And that whatever the Father does, the Son does also. So what does this teaching that's so clearly here in the passage say to us about the mindset that we ought to have in our relationships with one another?

Well, I would suggest, first of all, that we, as we think of Jesus being both divine and dependent, in our relationships with one another, we should have real confidence. They should be rooted in that shared understanding and shared appreciation and wonder in who Jesus is. Do we have confidence that we worship and serve a beautiful Lord? Do we have confidence that we're worshipping and serving someone before whom every knee will one day bow? Real confidence in who he is. But I wonder as well, as we seek to have the same mindset as Jesus Christ, whether we also need to have real confidence in who he is, but also real confidence and clarity in who we are. I've already referred you to chapter 2, verse 1, which talks about us being people who are united with Christ. Earlier on in Philippians, in recent weeks, we have heard that God has begun a good work in each of us and is going to carry on that good work until the day of Jesus Christ. And so just as Jesus, in his mindset, had a clear sense of his identity, so I think in our mindset, we need to both have a clear sense of the identity of Jesus, who he is, but also a clear sense of who we are. I love the children's talk today because it was all about

Peter's identity. Peter trying to prove who he was and doing so through looking at a whole variety of documents. But brothers, sisters, friends, today, in terms of our identity, do we have a really clear sense of who we are? Children of God, united with Christ, sons and daughters of the living God, worshippers of the one who was God from all eternity and before whom one day every knee shall bow.

This is who we are. And I think it should give us great confidence as we seek to live for and serve God.

And so the song in my mind, as I've been thinking through this truth, the truth of who I am in Christ, the truth of whom each of us are as we follow Jesus Christ is this.

[17:22] I am accepted. I'm forgiven. I'm fathered by the true and living God. I'm accepted. No condemnation. I'm loved by the true and living God. There's no guilt or fear as I draw near to the savior and creator of the world. There is joy and peace as I release my worship to you, O God.

But if Jesus was marked by a clear sense of who he was and yet a dependence on God, how much more that yes, we should be, have a clear sense of who we are in Christ. But how much more should we be marked by a complete dependence on God for all that we seek to be, for all that we seek to do for him, as we seek to demonstrate the same mindset as Jesus Christ. Divine yet dependence. But let's get into how he actually acted while here on earth. And I've suggested the two words, serving and sacrificing.

Verse seven, he made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant and being made in human likeness. He of all people could have stood on ceremony, could have reminded everybody of who he is. Angels waited, poised to do his bidding, to serve him.

And yet he said that he was among us, not as one who came to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many. He is the one who could take the towel and who could wash the feet of his disciples. And he is the one who could then show the ultimate demonstration of sacrificial love as he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

And as 1 John chapter 3 verse 16 says, we know what love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. [19:40] But again, in a passage that quickly challenges us to think about the practical application of what the Bible teaches, that passage then also says, we ought to give up our lives for our Christian brothers and sisters. And so in the same way as the example that we see of the mindset of Jesus here is a mindset marked by serving and sacrificing. We're going to have to think about what it looks like for us as individuals seeking to demonstrate the same mindset as Jesus, to be marked by people who are willing to serve and willing to serve and willing to show incredible sacrificial love for others.

We know what real love is because Christ gave up his life for us and we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. And I have to look around and I have to look in my own heart and I have to ask if we're going to be people marked by the same mindset as Jesus Christ. How are we getting on in Brunsfield Evangelical Church in this whole area of serving and sacrificing? Because it's the mindset that was so clearly the mindset of our Lord Jesus Christ. He came to serve and he gave himself sacrificially.

And it's the mindset that we'll see illustrated in those early verses of the passage that we'll turn to now. But I so don't want this just to be a theoretical look at this. I'm challenged about whether in my own life and as I play a part in the church here, about whether we're really emulating the mindset of Jesus Christ and can I ask you to think about whether you can identify some ways in which you're serving others in the church.

Now, of course, it's partly what we're looking at being done day in, week in, week out through helping and the rotas through those who are helping with the kids' church. And thank you for all those of you who are emulating the mindset of Jesus Christ by coming not to be served but to serve.

And thank you to those of you who are setting a real example of the mindset of Jesus Christ by showing such sacrificial love for others that where you could be looking after your own interests or those of your family, instead you're showing that sacrificial love and generosity to others.

[22:25] You're giving of your time. You're giving of your resources, your money. You're sharing your home. You're sharing your energies. You're literally laying down your lives for the benefit of the brothers and sisters in the church here because that seems to be what we're being asked to do, doesn't it?

Am I stretching it here or is that what we're actually being asked to do as we're being asked to show the same mindset as Jesus Christ? Isn't this absolutely at the heart of what it means to be Christians and the heart of what it means to be in a church together? It couldn't be further away from just coming along on Sundays and rubbing shoulders with each other and singing a bunch of songs and then going off and living our independent lives for the rest of the week, could it? It's about serving and sacrificing ourselves and thereby demonstrating the same mindset as Jesus Christ and thereby showing that we're people who are actually united with Christ. Let's just look briefly. I've got four more words for you.

If we've got divine and dependent and we've got serving and sacrificing. As I look at this little picture in chapter 1 verse 27 to 30, what I think we see there is Paul longing that these Christians demonstrating the same mindset as Jesus Christ would be confident and courageous.

Verse 27, they're going to have to stand firm in one spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose them. Being really, really clear

about their identity and their future. And so verse 28, they're not going to be frightened and they're absolutely clear that ultimately they will be saved and that they have a privilege in this point in time, not only to believe in Jesus Christ, but also to suffer for Jesus Christ. And this passage reminds us that as people who seek to display the mindset of Jesus Christ, we're going to look pretty different. We're going to look quite odd and we can expect to meet opposition and to end up suffering for it. And I wonder how we feel about that as we think of the opportunities that we have to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. What that will mean for how we conduct ourselves in the church, with our families, in our workplaces, with our neighbours, with our friends. [24 : 59] And whether we can have real confidence in who Jesus is and in who he has made us. And real confidence that we're going to live to serve and to show sacrificial love to those around us, even if it means we suffer real opposition. We've heard recent statistics in the last week or two about the massive declining numbers of those who are describing themselves as being people of faith in our country. And I think we need to recognise we will be increasingly at odds with the whole culture that we see round about us. But yet Paul would encourage us not to be deflated by that, but to be confident and courageous. Because we know our Jesus, we know who he is, we know that one day every knee will bow before him. And it's our privilege now to be those who declare who he is and who live for him and who seek to serve him. I just want to focus on two words in this little section before we move on to the final section.

Because I do think there's perhaps a risk that sometimes we think that somehow or other everything should be quite easy and straightforward. You know, we've kind of trusted in Jesus and he's come into our hearts and lives and, you know, it should be, you know, why does it feel hard? Why does it feel hard to live this way?

Well, the two words you'll find in this little section that the Apostle Paul uses are the word struggle and the word strive. Struggle and strive. Not words that suggest that he was finding it easy. In fact, it's quite clear from this passage he was finding it anything but easy. But he was determined, in light of this clear sense of who Jesus was, that he was going to seek to demonstrate the same mindset as Jesus Christ, and he was going to struggle and strive.

And maybe some of us today just feel a little bit weary with a struggle. We feel a little bit weary with the fact that it feels as though this business of following Jesus and remaining faithful to him is so counter-cultural that it's just a struggle.

[27 : 17] Maybe some of us feel that coming to church is just a struggle. Maybe some of us feel that our attempts to serve others and to show that sacrificial love to others is a struggle.

Well, another book I've been reading, a slightly more spiritual one this time, by Louis Giglio, a great book called Goliath Must Fall, says this, Comfort and familiarity are not what God points us towards. Jesus isn't in the business of flying to and fro for the rest of our lives, hand-delivering spiritual baby food to us. I like that quote.

Struggling and striving may well be something that we need to do, that we're challenged to do, as yes, we depend wholly on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also as we use all of the energy that he gives us in order to live for him and serve him.

Final section then is chapter 2, verses 1 to 4. And here it gets so incredibly pointed around how Paul wanted that church in Philippi to be and how he wants the church, how God wants the church in Brunsfield to be.

[28 : 36] And in an attempt to continue to give you two words, we have confident and courageous in chapter 1, verse 27 to 30, and in chapter 2, verse 1 to 4, we have them as like-minded and loving.

I'm not being clever there. The words are simply there in the passage. He wants them to be of the one mind, and he wants them to demonstrate remarkable, sacrificial love for one another.

Now, of course, that's only going to be possible as they maintain a real focus on Jesus Christ himself, isn't it? Let's just dwell for a minute or two on that challenge that he gives to them.

If you have any encouragement for being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind, doing nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, rather in humility, valuing others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of others.

And I wonder, what would this church be like if we were to live out that in our practical interactions with each other? What would it be like if we had that mindset of Jesus Christ, that preferring one

another, that always putting others' interests above our own?

[30 : 12] That position in verse 3 of doing nothing out of selfish ambition. Not that ambition itself is wrong, not that it's wrong to be ambitious, to be all that God has called us to be, to fulfil our full potential in Christ, absolutely not.

But to be absolutely clear that our ambition is to be all that God has called us to be so that we might be more effective in loving and serving those around us, whether in this church or beyond it.

And doesn't our mind quickly turn to the whole kind of picture of the Christian church and how divided it seems? And how focused it seems to be at times on small issues?

And yet we come here and see the Apostle Paul's plea that they would be like-minded, that they would be marked by oneness in terms of their love, in terms of their spirit, in terms of their mind, and that they would be marked by that sacrificial service for one another.

We're going to be entering into a really exciting period of church life at Brunnsfield. We're going to be entering into a period where we have a new pastor, as Graham steps into that role in just a couple of weeks' time, where we welcome on board a new assistant pastor, as Alistair also joins us in just a few weeks' time, where we welcome Ian, who has finished his secular employment early in order to step into service in the church here as the church manager, where we continue to enjoy having both Peter serving us and the three apprentices working with us.

[31 : 48] What a wonderful team we have. God has blessed us greatly by calling these men and women to serve us here. And let's pray for them.

Let's pray that they would be able to have the same mindset as Jesus Christ, as they seek to serve God and serve all of us and all those who would come into the church here.

That they might be captivated by that picture of who Jesus is and what he did, and that that might fuel their ministry and enable them to have such confidence in who they are in Christ, that they might be able to live lives of service and sacrifice.

But you know where I'm going with this, don't you? You know that it's not just that fantastic team that's been called today to demonstrate the same mindset as Jesus Christ. And absolutely, let's pray for them that they might be able to serve wholeheartedly and faithfully.

But my worry, I suppose, is that as we look at that great team, it allows some of us to think, well, that's fine, we can take our foot off the gas and we can be passengers. We can come along and enjoy what they have in store for us.

[32 : 58] Well, I hope it's clear as we've looked at the passage today that that's absolutely not what God has in store for us. And that God calls us all to live lives of service and sacrifice.

Whether we continue to be here or whether, as I know some of you, will be here for just a while and then scattered to other parts of the world. May it be that your desire is to develop the same mindset as Jesus Christ and to live lives of sacrificial love and service for him.

Whatever that may look like in our own context. Let's pray together. So Lord Jesus, thank you for who you are and thank you for all that you have done for us.

Thank you that you are a wonderful saviour. Thank you that you are an all-powerful God. Thank you that one day, Lord Jesus, every knee will bow before you and every tongue will confess that you are God to the glory of God the Father.

Thank you that now we have the honour and privilege of bowing our knees and confessing that you are God now and Lord Jesus, we realise that you call us now as we live our lives here on earth.

[34 : 24] You give us this high, high calling to demonstrate the same mindset as you did. And we ask for your help.

We ask for your grace. We ask that by the miracle that you do in each of our lives, this church might indeed be a place where we are being transformed by Jesus Christ.

We ask this for your glory, Lord Jesus. Amen. Amen.