

FIRST LESSON: Isaiah 55:8-9  
SECOND LESSON: 1 Corinthians 2: 1-16  
February 16, 2020

**“The Mind of Christ”**  
Sermon © Lisa C. Farrell

I learned a new word last week. Destin-easia. It’s when you go into a room and you have no idea why. My mind not only wanders, sometimes it goes off and has conversations with itself and clues me in later. I don’t know whether it’s age or experience, but I have learned to not believe everything I think, because the mind is a funny thing and I am capable of thinking several contradictory things all at once. That’s what the human mind does. I might imagine that I am one person with one opinion and approach to life, but just a little bit of digging reveals that there is a debate going on somewhere in the back room. I don’t know if they’re playing poker and smoking cigars back there, *but some days it feels like that*. Scientists have even noted that our mind keeps right on working on problems while we are asleep. If you’ve ever gone to bed trying to figure out how to do something and woken up in the morning with the answer—that is the result of your mind working on it overnight. So, if my mind is complicated and occasionally fragmented, what is the “mind of Christ”? It’s a strange expression when we stop and think about it. Does the mind of Christ ever have internal conflicts? And how is it that we could have the mind of Christ?

Paul begins today by saying that he didn’t arrive in Corinth with a big splash armed with a lot of impressive public speaking techniques. He didn’t have or use the latest methods to stir up emotion. There were no tightly woven syllogisms or carefully calculated gestures, no variations in his voice from low to high. He didn’t perform, as many of our media savvy ministers from mega churches do. He came with a simple message, and he came in weakness with fear and trembling. We might think Paul was exaggerating, but the fact is he had just emerged from some pretty significant persecution. In Antioch, Paul and Barnabas had been thrown out of town. (Acts 13:50). In Iconium, opponents tried to stone them. (Acts 14:4) In Lystra and Derbe they were followed by their opponents from Iconium and stoned again. (Acts 14:5) In Philippi, Paul and Silas were arrested and thrown into prison. (Acts 16:16-40) In Thessalonica, conflict with opponents set the city in an uproar. (Acts 17:5) In Beroea, they received a warm welcome at first, but then opponents from Thessalonica who followed them turned up and incited the crowds against them. (Acts 17:13) And in Athens, Paul got a cool reception. (Acts 17:16-34) It’s

no wonder by the time he got to Corinth that Paul was in a heap. What we really should be questioning is how on earth did he keep going?

Paul's message did not come with an impressive and polished presentation. It did not come with a lot of energy. He was worn out! But it did come with wisdom—a wisdom not of this world. God's wisdom is hidden in a mystery. The truth about Jesus has been revealed to those who come to God in faith. The political rulers of this world did not know who Jesus really was. If they had, they would not have crucified him. But what we do not know in the normal way through our eyes, ears and ability to think, God has revealed to us by the Spirit. There is a danger in just flat out stating this, however, because we could easily take this the wrong way, and many people have. We could throw out critical thinking altogether and replace it with "God told me." In Scotland we used to call this, "felt led poisoning." *I felt led to do this, I felt led to do that . . .* People have rationalized some very bizarre and dangerous things by claiming divine guidance.

Paul is not really saying this. He is not telling us to say that black is white and white is black. He's not telling us that facts aren't facts. He's saying we don't have *the whole story*. **We only understand partially because we only see superficially.** In 1974, when Hurricane Carmen was due to hit New Orleans a man came down to his local bank branch and withdrew all of his money. He did this because the bank was under construction and the tellers were temporarily located in a trailer. He genuinely thought that all of his money was in the trailer and it would blow away! There's seeing, **and there's understanding what we see.**

Paul tells us that the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. He compares God to us when he says, "For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God." We cannot separate spirit from mind and body in a human, and we cannot separate the three in God either. Take one part away and the damage is catastrophic. But when it comes to the Spirit of God there is a difference. My spirit cannot enter another human being to help out. If it could I would have done that a long time ago when my kids were young and given them a kick start to clean their rooms! I'd have reminded them to do their homework. I'd have given off loud alert signals when they were around certain of their friends. *That would have really annoyed them.* But my spirit is stuck in my body. It does not travel. God's Spirit, however, can. God's Spirit works in us and opens our eyes to spiritual reality. The person without the Spirit of God cannot comprehend the deep things of God. There is just no point of contact. But we have the mind of Christ, because we have the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit comes into our lives through faith. But the Spirit is far gentler than I probably would have been with my kids when they got up to some of their antics. We are given the choice to do things God's way or our way, to use our own wisdom or God's wisdom. It may take us repeatedly messing to finally turn to God and say, "Okay, what do YOU have in mind? How do you want me to handle this situation or person?" but eventually we

figure out that things go much better with God guiding the process. While this can sound complicated it's not, because in the end it all boils down to one thing—LOVE. God is love; therefore the mind of Christ will always guide us in the way of love.

Chapter 13 of I Corinthians is one of Paul's most famous writings. It is read at almost every wedding ceremony. It adorns walls and cards. We know it by heart. But only when we take it to heart can we really see and understand how God wants us to live.

- “Love is patient, love is kind.
- It does not envy,
- it does not boast,
- it is not proud.
- It does not dishonor others,
- it is not self-seeking,
- it is not easily angered,
- it keeps no record of wrongs.
- Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
- It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Love is the mind of Christ. And the world does not recognize it, because the world has structured itself for battle not peace. We are called to live in love in a world that does not know what love is. That is our challenge. That is our calling.

I can make all kinds of things complicated with my mind. I'm good at that. The “mind of Lisa” might be an interesting place to visit but it has definite limitations. The mind of Christ has no limitations, and the longer we walk in faith the more deeply we can experience God's Spirit working in us and through us. Life looks different from the perspective of God's love. We develop patience with others. We realize that we have no reason to envy and no reason to boast. Pride is exposed for the hollow thing that it is, and to dishonor another person becomes abhorrent to us. Why should we be self-seeking when God provides everything we need? And when I know how deeply I have been forgiven, anger and self-righteousness are not so quick to pour out of my mouth. Who am I that I should keep a record of wrongs when God has forgiven me so much? The Spirit of God never delights in evil, but always rejoices with the truth. When we live in the love of God we become the ones others seek out for comfort and help. Like God we will always protect, trust, hope and persevere, because love never fails.

To have the mind of Christ does not involve losing my own mind. *I can do that on my own.* This is different. I am still me, and still capable of making all the mistakes I make. It's a matter of progress not perfection. To have the mind of Christ is simply another way of saying that the Holy Spirit dwells in me, and the more room I make for God, the greater will be my wisdom and my peace. God reminds us through the prophet Isaiah, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. As the heavens are higher than the

earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” I can rely on my own limited understanding, or I can open myself up to the love, mercy and wisdom of God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Isaiah 55:8-9

<sup>8</sup> “For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
neither are your ways my ways,”  
declares the Lord.

<sup>9</sup> “As the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

1 Corinthians 2: 1-16

<sup>2</sup> And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. <sup>2</sup> For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. <sup>3</sup> I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. <sup>4</sup> My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, <sup>5</sup> so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.

<sup>6</sup> We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. <sup>7</sup> No, we declare God’s wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. <sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup> However, as it is written:

“What no eye has seen,  
what no ear has heard,  
and what no human mind has conceived”—  
the things God has prepared for those who love him—  
<sup>10</sup> these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup> For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. <sup>12</sup> What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. <sup>13</sup> This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. <sup>14</sup> The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. <sup>15</sup> The person with the Spirit makes

judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, <sup>16</sup> for,

“Who has known the mind of the Lord  
so as to instruct him?”

But we have the mind of Christ.