

How to Have Christian Attitudes

A sermon preached by Ted Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on Palm/Passion Sunday, April 8, 1990. Scripture Lessons: Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 39:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 27:11-54 (selected verses).

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

In our Epistle lesson St Paul writes, "Have this mind among yourselves, which you have in Christ Jesus" (RSV). And the NIV reads slightly differently: "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."

What does it mean to have the mind and attitude of Christ? Would it be fun to have the mind of Christ? I think it would be kind of fun to have the mind of Chevy Chase or Carol Burnett. But do you think it would be fun to have the mind of Christ?

I think there's many misconceptions about what it means to have the mind and attitudes of Christ. I imagine that some of you may be thinking, "If I had the mind and attitude of Christ I'd probably like the music of Bach more than country and western music so I'm not so sure I want to have the mind and attitude of Christ. And if I had the mind of Christ I'd probably prefer to watch old re-runs of *Leave it to Beaver* rather than *Saturday Night Live* which I now prefer. Or maybe the idea of having the mind and attitude of Christ doesn't appeal very much to you because you like to read the business section of the newspaper. Somehow it's hard for you to imagine anyone with the mind of Christ liking to read the business section. He'd probably prefer the section on religion.

But I don't think having the mind and attitude of Christ has anything to do with any of that. A person with the attitude and mind of Christ might very well like either Bach or Willy Nelson, either *Leave it to Beaver* or *Saturday Night Live*, either the religion or the business section.

What kind of mind and attitudes did Jesus have? He seemed to have a rare combination of confidence and humility. His confidence came from

knowing who he was. Jesus knew who he was. He knew he was loved by his heavenly Father. He knew that he was by nature equal to God. I believe this is an attitude that God wants each one of us to have: confidence that God is our heavenly Father, not of course in the same sense that Jesus is. Jesus was God's son by nature from all eternity. We become children of God by adoption, through faith in Christ. Nevertheless, God wants us to have this attitude of confidence that we're children of God through faith in Jesus Christ who died to save us and give us a new birth and a new family.

And a second attitude that Jesus had was humility. But please understand what Christian humility is. Many people think that humility entails putting ourselves down. That's not a humility. That's self-centeredness. There's a wonderful illustration of humility that I read long ago and have never forgotten. In 19th century England, two men, Disraeli and Gladstone, were political opponents and among the most powerful men in England. For many years either Gladstone or Disraeli was Prime Minister.

There's a story of a young woman who had the good fortune to dine at a state dinner with Disraeli on her right and Gladstone on her left. After the dinner the news media asked her what it was like to dine with the two most powerful men in England. She said, "When I talked with Gladstone I had the feeling that I was in the presence of one of the most powerful and brilliant men in the whole world. But when I talked with Disraeli I had the feeling that I was one of the most beautiful and intelligent women in the entire world." When we're in the presence of a truly humble person we become aware of how much we have to offer to others. Jesus was God in the flesh but when sinners were in his presence they didn't feel so much guilty as they felt loved and accepted and valuable to him.

Only a person who knows who they are can be a truly humble person. We are loved by God because God created us and Christ died for us. The Holy Spirit has called us into God's kingdom and made us a royal priesthood. We don't have to prove how great we are. Therefore can be humble in the sense that Christ was humble.

I wish that I had more of the mind of Christ. I wish that the non-churched in this community felt as comfortable and accepted by me and you as the non-churched and non-religious who lived in Palestine 2000 years ago felt loved and accepted by Christ. If we had more of the mind and attitude of Christ: confidence in who we are as a child of God and humility in the sense that others feel loved and accepted in our presence we would not be able to build a church big enough to contain all the people who would be there to worship and praise God.

Let us pray: Almighty God our heavenly Father, give us the mind and attitude of Christ. Let our confidence in your love shown to us in the death and resurrection of Christ enable and empower us to be humble as Christ was so that our hearts may be tender to all need and our hands give freely for His sake. Amen.

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