Title: The Mind of Christ in Listening & Service
Text: Philippians 2:1-11
Theme: Life Together: Building a Christ-centred Community

- Last Sunday, we covered Chapter 3 of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*, "The Day Alone." He teaches and an important principle for building a Christ-centered community: **We withdraw into God's presence so that we can be more fully present to others.**
- Mark 1:35 shows Jesus making time to pray amid the demands of ministry. Psalm 62 invites us to find our rest in God. Bonhoeffer helps us understand how solitude and community belong together.
- We need solitude because activity alone cannot sustain our spiritual lives. We need community because faith was never meant to be lived in isolation. We withdraw to listen to God, and we return to love and serve others.
- **The rhythm of Christian life is this: be still before God, be present with one another, and serve from the overflow of His grace.**
- In Chapter 4 of *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer identifies several practical ministries that sustain Christian community. Two particularly important ones are the ministry of listening and the ministry of helpfulness.
- These ministries are essential to the life of the church. But the Apostle Paul takes us deeper. In Philippians 2:1–11, he describes a community shaped by the character of Jesus Christ—a community marked by unity, humility, and sacrificial love.
- Paul does not simply tell us to become better people. He invites us to look at Jesus and allow His life to shape our relationships with one another.
- The central message is this: **The church becomes a Christ-centred community when its members share the mind and attitude of Jesus**.

The Mind of Christ Begins with Unity

- Paul begins in Philippians 2:1–2 by reminding the church of what they share in Christ: encouragement, comfort in love, fellowship in the Spirit, tenderness, and compassion.
- These are not just theological ideas. They are the spiritual resources God has given us to build community.
- Because we have experienced God's grace and compassion, we are called to extend that same grace and compassion to one another.
- Paul then writes: "Make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind."
- Notice that Paul is not asking everyone to have the same personality, preferences, cultural background, or opinions. He is calling for a shared commitment to Christ.
- Unity is more than simply getting along. Biblical unity means choosing relationship over division, understanding over judgment, and reconciliation over resentment. It means recognizing that we belong to one another because we belong to Christ.

- A church can have many programs and activities yet still lack genuine community. We can worship together on Sunday while remaining disconnected from one another.
- Paul reminds us that the foundation of Christian community is not our similarity. It is our shared experience of God's grace.

The Mind of Christ Is Expressed Through Humility

- Paul moves from unity to the attitudes that make unity possible: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves."
- Paul identifies two attitudes that can undermine Christian community: selfish ambition and vain conceit.
- Selfish ambition puts our own interests, recognition, and preferences first. Vain conceit makes us overly concerned with our own importance.
- These attitudes can find their way into the church. We may become more concerned about having our opinions heard than listening to others. We may prioritize our ministry preferences over the needs of the wider community. We may seek recognition rather than opportunities to serve.
- Paul offers a different way: humility.
- Christian humility does not mean thinking less of ourselves or denying our gifts. It means recognizing that what God has given us is meant to serve others.
- Humility changes the questions we ask:
    - Instead of asking, "What can this person do for me?" we ask, "How can I serve this person?"
    - Instead of asking, "How can I make my voice heard?" we ask, "Whose voice needs to be heard?"
    - Instead of asking, "How can I protect what is familiar to me?" we ask, "How can I make room for others?"
- Consider someone entering our church for the first time. They may be unfamiliar with our worship, language, traditions, or relationships. They may not know where to sit, whom to approach, or how to get connected.
- A welcoming church does more than expect newcomers to adjust to its existing culture. It is willing to listen, learn, and make room for them.
- This is especially important in an intercultural community. People from different cultural backgrounds may express faith, hospitality, and relationships differently. Humility allows us to move beyond simply tolerating those differences toward genuinely appreciating one another.
- It reminds us that newcomers are not simply people we welcome into our community; they are people who have something valuable to contribute to it.
- This is where belonging begins: when we make room for one another and recognize the value of every person.

The Mind of Christ Is Revealed Through Self-Giving Love

- Paul now brings us to the heart of the passage:
- "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus."
- Everything comes together in this verse. The Christian life is not simply about learning good principles. It is about allowing the character of Jesus to shape our relationships.
- What do we see in Jesus? We see someone who laid aside privilege, entered the lives of others, and willingly served.
- Throughout the Gospels, Jesus gave people His attention. He listened to His disciples, responded to those who approached Him, and welcomed people who were often overlooked.
- Consider the encounter with Bartimaeus in Mark 10:46–52.
- When Bartimaeus called out to Jesus, Jesus stopped and asked, "What do you want me to do for you?"
- Jesus was surrounded by a crowd, yet He stopped to give attention to one person. He did not dismiss Bartimaeus or assume He already knew what he needed. He gave him the opportunity to speak.
- This is a powerful example of listening.
- Bonhoeffer writes in *Life Together*, "Just as love to God begins with listening to His Word, so the beginning of love for the brethren is learning to listen to them."
- Bonhoeffer reminds us that listening is an act of love. When we genuinely listen, we set aside our own concerns and give another person our attention.
- Sometimes, listening can be a greater service than speaking.
- But listening is only the beginning. We must also be willing to respond to what we hear.
    - When someone shares a burden, are we willing to help carry it?
    - When someone struggles, are we willing to walk alongside them?
    - When someone needs encouragement, are we willing to offer it?
    - When someone is new, are we willing to help them find a place to belong?
- This is the movement from listening to helpfulness, and from helpfulness to genuine Christian community.
- Paul takes this even further by pointing us to the example of Jesus. Philippians 2:7 tells us that Jesus took the very nature of a servant. Although He possessed divine authority, He did not use His position for personal advantage. He willingly embraced the role of a servant.
- We see this beautifully illustrated in John 13, when Jesus washes His disciples' feet. The Lord and Teacher takes the position of a servant.
- Jesus demonstrates that leadership in God's kingdom is not about being above others but about being willing to serve others.
- Philippians 2:8 tells us that Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross.
- His humility was not merely an attitude. It was expressed through sacrificial love and obedience to the Father. This is the foundation of our life together.

- We do not serve simply to be recognized or appreciated. We serve because we have experienced the love of Christ.
- We do not listen simply because it is a useful interpersonal skill. We listen because every person deserves our attention and care.

Conclusion: Living with the Mind of Christ

- Paul concludes by declaring that God exalted Jesus and gave Him the name above every name. Every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- Ultimately, the mind of Christ is about bringing glory to God. Our relationships, our service, and our life together should reflect the lordship of Jesus.
- Let me leave you with one reflection question: "What would change in us and our church if each of us began to live with the mind of Christ?"
- I also want to leave you with three simple challenges:
    - Listen to someone. Give someone your time and attention. Be genuinely interested in their story.
    - Serve someone. Look for one practical way to help or encourage another person.
    - Make room for someone. Reach beyond your familiar circle and help someone feel included and valued.
- These may seem like small things, but these are expressions of the mind of Christ which ground us as a Christ-centered community.
- May our life together become a testimony to the love of Jesus. May people encounter the hope of Christ through the way we welcome, listen to, and serve one another.
- **Unity is our calling. Listening is our posture. Service is our expression of love. Jesus Christ is our example and our Lord.**