



Who do you want to be like? All of us have people we admire so much that we'd like to be like them. Fearless, carefree, empathetic, funny, athletic, problem solver, organized, musical. Who's your person? What qualities do they have?

A few years ago I attended the memorial service of Stewart Mitchell, Mark Mitchell's father. Person after person got up to speak and said, "My granddad (my dad, my uncle) would always tell me he loved me. He'd put his hand behind my neck to make sure I was looking at him and he'd say, 'I love you.' I just knew he loved me the most." It became a joke because everyone had the same experience. This had a profound effect on me. I didn't know Stewart but I decided I wanted to be like him, to give my family the opportunity to say this about me at my memorial some day. And since then, I've made it a priority to tell my family multiple times a day that I love them.

Our verses of scripture today instruct us to be like Jesus.

May God ... give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had (Rom. 15:5).

In the center of our verses Paul prays that the church in Rome would have the same "attitude of mind" as Jesus. He wants them to be like Jesus. The phrase "attitude of mind" in the Greek describes thinking, feeling, talking and being driven by the same motives as Jesus. We are holistically transformed into being like Jesus. That'd be amazing wouldn't it? To be more and more like Jesus.

Paul is praying that this young Roman church would have the same attitude of mind as Jesus because he knew this would change them and then change the world. This change is described in three ways in our verses today. Having Jesus like-mindedness ...

- » Fosters unity (verses 1-7)
- » Results in glory to God (verses 8-13)
- » Results in salvation to the nations (verses 8-13)

Having Jesus Like-mindedness Fosters Unity

Verse 1 reiterates what Romans 14 said, "*the strong need to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please themselves.*" The people with power, money and influence aren't supposed to use this power to further their own plans but to build up and "please" the weak. Don't please yourself but please your neighbor (v. 2), build your neighbor up (v. 2), accept one another (v. 7).

Accept = bring someone into your heart. This is a warm, loving, heart-felt acceptance. As a person follows Jesus and their attitude of mind becomes more like him, an acceptance of and embracing of others builds in your heart. You love people more and more. You're prompted to help someone, even at a big cost to yourself. All of this builds unity. This is a supernatural outcome. It runs against the grain of human nature. Yet this is the product of Jesus like-mindedness.

This is possible because of the example and teaching of Jesus, for even Christ didn't please himself but took hardships for us. This is what the scripture of the Old Testament taught us. Jesus served the Jews to show them God's promises. Jesus was perfectly others-focused and accepting, so when we grow in Jesus like-mindedness, this will grow in our hearts, actions and words. Isn't this amazing!

Last week our verses from Colossians 3 told us that we should "*let the message of Christ dwell in our hearts.*" The more we let this happen, the more we'll experience the heart-level changes that produce unity between us—the family of God. "The way you can tell how much you understand the gospel is to look at how much you love people despite their flaws" (Tim Keller).

Christ-like unity accepts and loves people regardless. Certainly we'd all love to live in a world where everyone else was kind, rational and overly gracious. But that's not our world and that's not us.

Every sailor could agree on one fact. Had it not been for the captain, they never would have survived. The storm came suddenly, and in a matter of moments hulls were broken, decks were awash, and sailors were floundering in the water. But as quickly as the storm arose, so came the captain, maneuvering his large vessel between the waves and rescuing one sailor after another. Before they knew it, they were deposited safely on an island, listening to the instructions of the captain, who said, "There are more still at sea. You stay here until I return. Build a tall fire using the trees of the island to keep yourselves warm and to send a beacon for those who need safety."

Of course, the sailors were happy and quick to oblige, and they set about the task of building a large fire. Then they waited and waited and waited. The longer they waited the more their gratitude passed. Their thankfulness turned into restlessness, and appreciation for the captain mutated into aggravation with each other.

No one could remember exactly when the argument started, but it had something to do with the captain's instructions. Did he say to use **only** trees for the fire or **mostly** trees for the fire? As they began to discuss it, they couldn't agree. Some said, "Surely he meant trees only. He said build a fire made out of trees." Others said, "A little brush and some grass and leaves won't hurt. He'll understand. Mostly trees won't hurt."

Conversation led to opinion, and opinion led to discussion. Discussion led to dispute, and dispute led to debate. Soon debate led to division, and there were two fires on the island. There was the trees-only fire and the trees-mostly fire.

Peace returned to the island for a short time, until dispute broke out in the trees-only camp.

One day in conversation someone said, "I'm sure he wants us to use cypress trees only in the fire because, after all, he gestured to some cypress trees as he spoke." Another one said, "But he was standing closer to an elm tree." Still another said, "The predominant tree on the island is oak. Surely these are to be oak trees in our fire." Conversation led to opinion, and opinion led to discussion. Discussion led to dispute, and dispute led to division. Soon the trees-only camp splintered into three other camps: elm-only, cypress-only, and oak-only.

Things didn't go much better on the southern end of the island where the trees-mostly camp was. They didn't have trouble with the contents of the fire, but they had conversation and conflict over the height of the fire. The captain had left instructions to build a tall fire. How tall is tall?

One person's definition of tall and another's might not be the same, so in short order, new fires were started, each of differing heights. In time, the island was freckled with small fires rather than one large fire. The captain, who had been watching this from the ocean, shook his head and sighed.

If the story didn't ring so true, it would be bizarre. But someone doesn't have to spend much time in the Christian faith before he notices a lot of fires on this island. Some of these fires are necessary and good, because to reach the world you have to go into the world. Sending sailors to start new fires in areas where there are none is right and good. But some of the fires we see are not there by purpose or intention but as a result of division. This isn't a new problem. Even before the crucifixion of Christ, disciples were arguing about who was in and who was out.

This parable shows us the tendency people have to break up into smaller and smaller groups over disputable matters. When we do this, we aren't having the "same attitude of mind toward each other as Jesus." We're getting off track and off task. The captain wanted the rescued sailors to get along and light one big fire so others could be rescued. Like Jesus wants his saved children to love one another sacrificially, to accept one another in your heart and to be as dedicated to their best as you are to your own.

As we're growing in Jesus like-mindedness, we'll see a change within ourselves that must change our interactions with others. We are sacrificial, humble and always seeking to understand life from another person's perspective. This moves us toward unity. What relationships are you in that involve an unnecessary dispute? What could you do that could restore unity and acceptance of your fellow Christian? That's the first result of Jesus like-mindedness.

Having Jesus Like-mindedness Results in Glory to God

Verses 5-6 connect the like-mindedness with Jesus to one mind and one voice glorifying God. A moment of worship is being described where people are in a room together, like us today, and each of them are looking to Jesus and moving toward having the same attitude of mind as Jesus and their individual experiences multiply as they're praising and glorifying God. Verse 7 says that as the church accepts one another the result is praising God. Verse 9 says that the godless Gentiles will even glorify God. Verses 9-12 say Jews and Gentiles are praising God all over the world.

Paul's goal is never just harmonious human relations but the ultimate aim of Christ and his apostle is to display the glory of God—the beauty of God, the greatness of God, the many-sided perfections of God.

All of creation, all of church, all of society and culture exist to display God's glory. Nothing and no one is an end itself, but only God. Romans 11:36 says that all things are "*from him and through him and to him.*" Church worship services, church nurseries, church committee meetings, church Community Groups, church evangelism, church missions—all of them exist for this one ultimate thing—to make much of the greatness of God.

Would you join me and pray with me that God would make this the atmosphere of our church? We will not have succeeded if we are known as a friendly place. And we will not have succeeded if we are known for serving delicious tacos. We'll be on our way to true success if we are known as a people consumed with the glory of God.

- If our kids would speak of the glory of God.
- If our teenagers love the glory of God more than the glory of sports or music or fashion.
- If all of the adults pursue the glory of God more than the glory of financial success.
- If our older people rejoice in the hope of the glory of God just over the horizon.

John Piper said, "Almost everything in American culture threatens this radically serious, God-centered passion to see and savor and show the glory — the greatness and beauty and worth of the full range of his perfections, his eternal being and unchanging

character, his independence and self-sufficiency and holiness, his infinite power and wisdom and goodness and justice and wrath and mercy and patience and grace and love. Almost everything in American culture threatens to make our devotion and our services and our mind and our heart shallow and casual and chatty and — our most favorite blessing of choice — fun.”

Jesus had this kind of attitude of mind. When he learned that his good friend Lazarus has very sick and near death he said, *“This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”* Then when Jesus and the disciples arrived at Lazarus’ house and Lazarus was dead the disciples were confused and questioned Jesus. Jesus said, *“Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?”*

The miracles of Jesus were always intended to reveal more than physical power of healing or raising people from the dead. The miracles were to reveal the glory of God.

And whenever we’re facing hardships and challenges that are stretching us—breaking us, breaking our hearts—we have the same opportunity. If we respond in faith instead of fear, we can make room for God’s glory to shine.

Here’s the bummer for us: When everything is going really well and nicely for us, the typical explanation for this will be glory to you. “Way to go. You’re great!” It’s always through our responses to the hardships in our lives that we reveal the supernatural power of God and his glory. What hardships are you facing today? You can reveal God’s glory in your responses and this is possible by growing in Jesus like-mindedness.

Paul’s question is: How do we become the kind of people who are of one mind in denying ourselves, sacrificing legitimate freedoms to please others, and being able with one voice (in spite of all the differences between weak and strong) to glorify God together? The root issue is how we gain the same attitude of mind of Jesus Christ.

Having Jesus Like-mindedness Results in Salvation to the Nations

Verse 8 tells us that Jesus became a servant of the Jews so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed. That’s the promise of salvation. Verse 9 tells us that Jesus’ plan also included Gentiles coming to salvation. That’s why they would glorify God “because of his mercy.” That’s his salvation mercy. Jesus was all about bringing salvation to everyone. So if we have his attitude of mind, we will be all about salvation for everyone too.

To drive this point home, Paul does something very cool in verses 9–12. He quotes from three different parts of the Old Testament. Commentator and Pastor Douglas Moo points this out. “Paul cites every part of the Old Testament – the writings (vs 9), the law (vs 10) and the prophets (vs 12) – to show that inclusion of

Gentiles with Jews in the praise of God has always been part of God’s purposes.”

Step 1 – Praise among the Gentiles, quoting 2 Samuel (v. 9).

Step 2 – The Gentiles are invited to rejoice with God’s people, quoting Deuteronomy 32 (v. 10).

Step 3 – So that all people will extol him, quoting Psalm 117 (v. 11).

Step 4 – All of this will be accomplished by the “Root of Jesse” ... this is Jesus, quoting Isaiah 11 (v. 12).

God’s plan of salvation has always been about taking the Gospel to every nation. This wasn’t a new surprise Jesus sprung on Israel. It was in their sacred scriptures. Of course, this is true for you and me today. God wants his message of salvation to be shared with every nation.

Right before Jesus ascended to heaven he told his disciples, *“He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things’”* (Luke 24:46-48). Will you pray with me that our church grows as we follow these instructions of Jesus and spread his message of repentance and forgiveness? Let’s pray that God would transform us to have Jesus like-mindedness.

It’s because of this that a couple from our church will be leading another mission trip to Honduras this summer. They’re taking the love of Jesus to the children at Garden of Love and Hope, an economic orphanage in Honduras. If you know Albert and Fiona Lee or Karyn Arle, let’s surround them with prayer and financial support to make this trip happen. It’s because of this that many of us support a child through Compassion International. Although we’re not there physically, our monthly financial support provides schooling, healthy food and teaching about Jesus.

This is what it looks like when we are growing in Jesus like-mindedness. We start loving the nations like Jesus loves the nations.

Turn with me to Acts 13. I want to share one more example with you that paints a beautiful picture of everything I’ve been talking about today. *“Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off”* (Acts 13:1-3).

Do you see the Jesus like-mindedness and all three of the results that Romans 15 describe? They were praying and fasting together. Part of this was praising God. This is an example of glorifying God. They were united in heart enough to discern that the Spirit was telling them to send two of their group on a trip. I see

amazing love and humility here. They were accepting and loving one another, seeking God first and their own desires second. And the Spirit told them to set Barnabas and Paul apart to reach the nations, our third result of being Jesus like-minded.

Would you join me in praying that God would give us the same attitude of mind as that of Christ Jesus?

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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