

The Mind of Christ: Wisdom for All Ages Reading: Philippians 2:5-11 *Feast of the Holy Name/A*
By the Rev. Karen Faye Siegfried; Trinity Episcopal Church, Sutter Creek, CA 1/1/2017

During an eye exam, the optometrist says to you something like this: "Things are going to get very blurry for a minute." Lenses click by and in an instant, where there had been legible letters, now there are just grey-black blobs in front of you. No force of will or act of squinting can bring the blobs into focus. You cannot see what was there a moment before. Or maybe the experience happens in reverse: things start out blurry and then, with the correct lens to look through, the whole world comes into focus. We all want our vision to be in focus and so we get eye exams, glasses, and for older folks, cataract surgery.

But sometimes, we ignore the blurriness in our own spiritual lives, unable or unwilling to discern the truth. We often settle for white lies, half-truths, and deceitful claims, unaware of the negative impact to our society. There is a whole, new enterprise that has been created to expose false news that infects our social media. Lies destroy innocent victims and leave the rest of us to wonder what is true and what is bogus. It is into this context of blurriness and falsehood that today's first reading utters prophetic words: "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." This is the wisdom that St. Paul offered to his church in Philippi.

Paul is concerned about dissension among its members and about opponents who preach righteousness based on circumcision and law observances. He urges the Philippians to be unified in mind and united in a spirit of love and concern for the common good. Paul envisions the life of this community being formed by the mind of Christ, a spirit of truth. He longs for this Christian community to embrace a posture of humility and loving service to one another rather than competition and grasping for power and control. Such an insightful biblical passage can encourage us to take a look at our own congregation. Does our life together reflect "the same mind that was in Christ Jesus"? What does it mean to have the mind of Christ and how do we attain it? For me, it means embracing the teachings, the wisdom, and the spirit of Jesus. It means to be open to the Word of God which is embedded not only in Scripture but in all creation.

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God." We Christians claim that this Word of God became enfleshed in the person of Jesus, so much so, that we follow Jesus as the mouthpiece of God for humanity. However, we also know that the Word of God existed before the birth of Jesus. This means that the wisdom of God comes to us through prophets, through creation, through the Holy Scriptures, and through enlightened minds. From time to time, I experience this wisdom, this Word, through remarkable quotes uttered by those who walk in the Light. Each year I share this wisdom with the folks at Trinity, hoping it will encourage all of us to put on the mind of Christ: A posture of humility, service, compassion, and an embrace of the Truth. Here are a few of the quotes I collected during 2016:

Truth:

- "A lie doesn't become truth, wrong doesn't become right, and evil doesn't become good just because it's accepted by a majority."
- "Disclaim every claim for truth where you don't see it united with love." [Bishop Tutu]
- "When interpreting the Bible, filter it through the larger biblical theology of 'God is love.' If where your interpretation ends up excludes, belittles, is violent, ignores those in need, or allows you to feel superior to others, it isn't loving. It isn't from love. It isn't of God." [Mark Sandlin]

Courage:

- "Courage isn't about having the strength to go on; it's about going on when you have no strength." [Rocelle Wisoff-Fields]
- "Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intention. So go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally. The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you." [Knost]
- "Ships don't sink because of the water around them; ships sink because of the water that gets in them. Don't let what's happening around you get inside you and weigh you down."
- "You wake up every morning to fight the same demons that left you so tired the night before and that my love is bravery."

- “Real courage is when you know you're licked before you begin, but you begin anyway and see it through no matter what.”
- “Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the little voice at the end of the day that says I'll try again tomorrow.” [Mary Anne Radmacher]

Numbers:

- Don't worry about the numbers. Help one person at a time and start with the person nearest you.” [Mother Theresa]
- 1% control the world; 4% are sellout puppets; 90% are asleep. 5% know and are trying to wake up the 90%. The 1% don't want the 5% waking up the 90%.”

Faith and Forgiveness:

- “Faith is not about everything turning out OK. Faith is about being OK no matter how things turn out.”
- “Faith is the heart which perceives God and not the reason. That is what faith is: God perceived by the heart, not by reason.” [Blaise Pascal]
- “Faith is the strength by which a shattered world shall emerge into the light.” [Helen Keller]
- “Hope is hearing the melody of the future. Faith is to dance to it.” [Ruben Alves]
- “Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet sheds on the heel that has crushed it.” [Mark Twain]

Favorite Wisdom Sayings:

- “If you don't make the time to work on creating the life that you want, you're going to spend a lot of time dealing with a life you don't want.” [Kevin Ngo]
- Growth is painful. Change is painful. But nothing is as painful as staying stuck somewhere you don't belong.” [Mandy Hale]
- “Complaining about a problem without proposing a solution is called whining.”
- “When you let go of what no longer serves you, you create space for what's meant to be.”
- “With guns, you can kill terrorists, with education you can kill terrorism.” [Malala Yousafzai]
- “No one heals himself by wounding another.” [St. Ambrose]
- “You either get bitter or you get better. It's that simple. You either take what has been dealt to you and allow it to make you a better person, or you allow it to tear you down. The choice does not belong to fate. It belongs to you.” [Josh Shipp]
- “Greed says that the more you get, the more you have. Christ says the more you give away in love, the more you are.” [Frederick Buechner]
- “Here is the world. Beautiful and terrible things will happen. Don't be afraid.” [Frederick Buechner]

Inclusion of all of God's People:

- “God's love is too great to be confined to any one side of a conflict or to any one religion.”
- “Exclusion is never the way forward on our shared paths to freedom and justice.”
- “Nothing that I can do will change the structure of the universe. But maybe, by raising my voice I can help the greatest of all causes-goodwill among men and peace on earth.” [Albert Einstein]
- “If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor. If an elephant has its foot on the tail of a mouse and you say that you are neutral, the mouse will not appreciate your neutrality.”

Peaceful Thoughts, Healing our mind:

- “Your worst enemy cannot harm you as much as your own unguarded thought.” [Buddha]
- “The quieter you become, the more you can hear.”
- “Healing doesn't mean the damage never existed. It means the damage no longer controls our lives.”
- “On particularly rough days, I like to remind myself that my track record for getting through bad days so far is 100%, and that's pretty good.” [Peaceful mindpeacefullife.org]
- “Prayer is sitting in the silence until it silences us, choosing gratitude until we are grateful, and praising God until we ourselves are an act of praise.” [Richard Rohr]
- “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.” [Philippians 2:5]