

## Have This Mind in You

“What were you thinking?” Have you ever had anyone ask you that? What on Earth were you thinking? People ask us that for a reason. I think, in part, it’s because we have a tendency to react. We sometimes do or say things without thinking them through.

Some years ago, when my girls were little, they were at home alone with me. Barbara was working. The girls were arguing with one another- again. And, as it sometimes happens, the argument escalated and they hit one another. Now when I stopped them and when I said to them, “It doesn’t matter what they said, don’t hit.” Laura turned around to me and said, “Rachel hit me first.” Now this wasn’t the first time that we had had this discussion, and by this time I was well and truly mad. And in a fit of anger, I said something- and I’m not going to tell you what I said- but I will tell you that I later came to regret what I said.

The fact is we all do stuff like that. Every one of us or at least most of us was raised in a Christian household. When we say that there are certain expectations that are raised. We know how we are supposed to act . We know what mind is supposed to be in us, and yet we often fall short of that goal.

What’s ironic is that the people who are supposed to teach us this “mindset”, if you will -like me- often break the code of conduct themselves. Just as I taught Laura the wrong way of behaving with my mistake, so my parents often taught me the wrong pattern of behavior. I’m guessing that happened with your parents, too, and if you have children, I’m guessing that happened with your children as well.

The first thing I want to say here is that this is not a new problem. It’s a hard thing for us to grasp in Western civilization because we tend to view things in extremes: things are either hot or cold, black or white, right or wrong, up or down. These same kinds of extremes apply in our thinking about people. We tend to think of people as essentially bad or good, smart or stupid, guilty or innocent. Eastern civilization doesn’t see things as being nearly as clear cut. In their view, people have the capacity to be both bad and good, smart and stupid, and so forth.

Yesterday, I was doing a funeral, and I said if you were to take a diamond and look at it through a jeweler’s loupe, you would see many facets to it, and you probably see many imperfections when you look at it that closely. It’s probably pitted and has cracks and scars in it, but when you take that jeweler’s loupe away and you look at it less closely, it’s no less beautiful for all the imperfections that it has. People are the same way.

We also are laboring under a false assumption in the Western World. Ever since the Enlightenment we have asserted that the human being is a rational creature. We

believe that this leads us to always rationally consider each decision and behave in the appropriate manner every time. If we're not doing that, we must not be being rational.

Well, friends that's hogwash! People are not rational. I know that I would be healthier if I would exercise more and eat better. I know that. I'm sure everyone in here knows that. Yet, invariably when I pass by Jack's I go through the drive through! That's not rational! That's not rational behavior! I'm eating it because I like a bacon cheeseburger. It tastes good, but it's not rational.

On a more serious note, if we really believe that we're rational creatures, then how could there possibly be such a thing as sin? If we behaved rationally every time, then we would never sin. The fact is, Paul and the other biblical writers knew that we don't behave rationally. From a psychological standpoint, sin really comes down to the fact that we are- all of us - guided by our emotions, and emotions clash from time-to-time. We use reason, to the extent that we reason at all, to justify decisions we have already made because of the way we feel most of the time.

One way to see this is by looking at the description of Christ that I just read to you that Paul gives here in Philippians and then contrast it to Adam, the first man. The biblical writers often point to Adam as the archetype of what humans really are, just as Christ is the archetype of the human we should be if we were without sin.

A close look at the two shows just how perfect Christ is and how far short of the mark we are. So, let's look at this hymn's description of Christ and contrast it with Adam. First, the hymn tells us that Christ was in the form of God. We are told that Adam was created in God's image So far so good. But the comparison ends there. Christ, according to Paul, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But a quick Genesis shows that the serpent tempted Eve by telling her that if she ate of the fruit she would be like God. Apparently, it was something to be grasped in Adam's view. Where Christ did not seek equality with God, Adam and Eve did.

The comparisons get no better from there. Christ, according to Paul, took on the form of a servant. Adam sought to be more powerful. He sought the knowledge to be like God. Christ humbled himself, Adam was trying to exalt himself. Christ was obedient unto death, Adam was disobedient unto death

Now this may sound as if I'm being critical of Adam here, and by extension, all of humanity. Remember though, that Adam is just an archetype of all humanity here. It's not in our nature to be humble. We all tend to exalt ourselves How many of us truly want to serve others? Wouldn't it be much better to lead? Wouldn't it be much better to call the shots, rather than to go out and serve. If we thought there were a chance that we could be equal with God, would we reject it because didn't think that was something to grasped as Christ did?

It's these very differences that make the coming of Jesus Christ so necessary and such a world- shaking event. The truth is despite the exhortation of Paul, we are going to

get this wrong some of the time, maybe even most of the time. Truthfully, I seldom, if ever, have it in my mind to be humble. I exalt myself way too much. Ever so much more than I do God. Obedient unto death? I don't know about that. I'm often not obedient even to the point where I am inconvenienced, much less obedience unto death. Being in the form of God, created in God's image, I have too often looked upon that as something to grasp, rather than something not to be grasped.

But maybe, maybe if I just remind myself from time to time that I need to have this model in mind like Paul said, occasionally- once in a while- I will truly act like God's servant. Have this mind in you.