

Sermon - March 13, 2022 - Lent 2 -Pastor Ventura

Having a Different Mindset

Philippians 3:17–4:1

Dear Friends in Christ!

The reading from Philippians this morning call us in this Lenten Season, to set our minds well. To set them in the things of God rather than on earthly things.

This is Lent, a season that has been observed by the Church throughout time... But somehow and gradually Lent is becoming a mystery even among Christians. It is either considered an outdated tradition or its observance has lost its meaning.

Three practices have been observed in Lent through time: Prayer, fasting, and works of mercy. It is a time when Christians mourn over their sin in repentance and learn again to trust in their Savior. Now we know that any time is good for that but Lent as such invites us to refocus on what is important and refocusing on what is important requires thinking and meditation.

But how easy is it to think and mediate in today's culture? We are surrounded by noise, even in our quiet places, there is noise, the radio or the tv is always on, Facebook, or twitter is just a click away... always asking us to give our input. I mean our culture is inundated with input. How many times we are disrupted by several things at once. It is never quiet really. Sometimes it's a wonder we can think at all!

Lent is a good time to refocus, but for us to refocus we must also learn to focus less on some things and more on what is important. And for that, something must change. That's why Lent invites us to give up something during this season as a way of fasting, something that is a regular part of our lives, things like certain kinds of food or drinks, or maybe even Facebook, and instead focus on that which is very important, Jesus Christ, who gave up everything for us, even life itself.

But to refocus, we do need a different Mindset, Paul tells us today. That instead of setting our minds on the earthly things, we are to set them on the things of Heaven.

A mindset, the dictionary tells us is: "a particular way of thinking : a person's attitude or set of opinions about something"

Many religious gurus, pop psychologists, motivational speakers, and other "experts" on leadership talk about having the right mind-set for success. They'll tell you

that your way of thinking, your set of assumptions, how you make decisions is everything. There's a lot of truth to that. To be sure, the wrong mind-set, such as holding on to former failures or pain from the past, or holding on to the wrong world view, can hinder you from much in this life. I won't argue with that. But while positive thinking and steps to recovery can help one move forward in life, does not set us in the proper and life-giving mindset

Experts on psychology and behavioral studies say that there are two kinds of mindsets, one is called "The fixed mindset." Someone with a fixed mindset, will not be happy with just succeeding and looking smart and talented, but that person must be pretty much flawless. And with an urgency of urgency to prove yourself over and over. Will not deal well with insufficiency or failures. Their goal in life is to prove themselves, in the classroom, in their careers, and in their relationships. Every situation calls for a confirmation of their intelligence, personality, or character. Every situation is evaluated: Will I succeed or fail? Will I look smart or dumb? Will I be accepted or rejected? Will I feel like a winner or a loser? Now, those are good questions to ask, but a "fixed mindset" will stay focused only on the winning alternative and on its own way.

Now the second is called the "growing mind-set." Those who have this mindset will consider their traits not as written in stone, but they are the starting point for development. This growing mind-set is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts. Although people may differ in every which way—in their initial talents and aptitudes, interests, or temperaments – everyone can change and grow through application and experience. These people will believe that although they cannot become geniuses, they can accomplish unforeseen greatness through years of passion, toil, and training.

I think that we all can benefit from a personal assessment, which do I have, a "fixed" or a "growing" mindset? But do not stop there, because the Scripture tell us that there is a better mindset, a new one, and yes, a growing one. It is the kind of mind-set the apostle Paul is talking about in the epistle reading for this morning. This mindset is a gift from God given to you in your Baptism and will be complete on the last day. It is the new mindset, one which focuses on Christ and our heavenly home.

Now this mind-set Paul says clings to Christ, in faith focuses on him. This mind-set puts aside anything that fails us ultimately. Anything that is earthly, any thing human made, or human strength. And turns our focus, helps us to put our eyes of trust on Christ and his work on the cross of Calvary. That's what Paul did, and encourages us to do too: "Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us" (3:17).

Often when today speakers and prominent leaders give their talks or sermons, they focus on their own strength and ability, and want us to follow their examples to imitate their road to success, "I did this or that.." "I'm the better one" "God revealed to me... because...I'm good." But Paul is different, he is far more than some religious guru or expert offering practical advice based on his own experiences. He is a servant of Christ Jesus. And what he must share with the saints at Philippi and with you is much more than seven steps to transform your mind-set for success. "Join in imitating me" is an invitation that has little to do with him and everything to do with Jesus.

While the "successful" leaders and preachers of today may show off their accomplishments, Paul counts his as loss, he says: "Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." (Phil. 3:8a)

Anything that could give him confidence in the flesh he sets aside, he clings instead, solely on the works of Jesus Christ. His passion, his death, his burial and his resurrection for our sake.

This new mind-set laments the rejection of the cross of Christ for self-glory, as others were doing at Philippi. They were having a "fixed mindset" indeed. While Paul himself puts away the things that brought confidence in the flesh, the "fixed mind-set" he had at one point, there were many in the Church who did not. And after several calling them to repentance, and in this chapter he warns about them again, this time with weeping, lamenting their ambitions toward self-glory and their rejection of Christ in so doing. "For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things" (3:18–19).

The letter to the Philippians is, for the most part, encouraging, even though Paul himself is in chains for the Gospel. But there's a threat more dangerous than

imprisonment or even death. It's a rejection of Christ and his work on the cross, for our sake, his life-giving work. The issue here is a false confidence in one's own flesh and keeping on living in a "fixed mind-set." Wanting to find life in the temporal, or where there is none.

It's so easy to fall back on our "fixed mindset" whatever that looks like. Our accomplishments, our philosophies, our politics, our worldviews. Even in Lent that's a temptation for us. What did you give up for Lent this year? Chocolate? Soda? Social media? It's fine to practice self-discipline, in fact we are encouraged to do. It can be a great spiritual exercise, but sometimes it's easy to go too far, like when your self-discipline becomes something you hold over God or your neighbor. The old man in us wants always a bit of credit. We want to impress God and our neighbor too. It may seem harmless on the surface, but ultimately it rejects the cross and all that Jesus accomplished for you there. This is the "fixed mind-set" with a hint of the "growing mind-set" of the old Adam, not of the new one you were given at your baptism.

This was our Lord's lament over Jerusalem in the Gospel—that God's people had such a mind-set. They had rejected the prophets, stoned and killed them, just as they threatened Jeremiah in today's Old Testament Reading. And so they rejected God's promised Son as well. The voice of the prophets was ignored, the call to repentance rejected. Just before he wept over Jerusalem, Jesus talked about the narrow door. Why will many who seek to enter not be able? Because of confidence in the flesh clinging to their "fixed mindset" trusting themselves only, thereby rejecting Christ and his cross.

How about you today? Any still living in the "fixed mindset"? It is true, that even when we aspire to have a "growing mindset" we still want it in our "fixed mindset", my way and mine only, what can I do for myself and by myself. If you are one of those then the invitation is for us to repent and to allow and rejoice in the New Mind-set we have given in Christ.

To live in it and realize that we have already given a "growing mindset." It was gifted to us in the waters of Holy Baptism. There we were washed clean, and were filled with the holy Spirit, who is now working in us continually. Changing our minds, changing our hearts, leading us always to focus on Christ, but molding us to walk in His

ways, and empowering us to do the things he calls us to do. Learning from Jesus who sought to give God glory. His mind-set was to glorify God by giving up everything for you, even his life. Paul so beautifully proclaimed that in chapter 2—that Christ became a servant, obedient even to death for you. He emptied himself of everything, to be filled with all your sin, your flawed ambitions, your filthy self-righteousness. He forgives your self-righteousness and assures you of his love. And now, he covers you with his own perfect righteousness.

This mindset looks ahead. It looks for the return of Christ and your own resurrection: “We await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. Therefore . . . stand firm . . . in the Lord, my beloved” (3:20–4:1). That’s the goal, not self-glory but God’s, his glory bestowed on you fully when Jesus comes again.

And in the meantime, this growing mindset looks in kindness towards the neighbour, taking their best interest always, in love, in mercy, and always looking for their salvation. So, they too may give God glory and be transformed at the resurrection of our bodies.

And Jesus has the power to transform us, because of his victory over death, and the devil.

So dear friends, lets press on, we have a new mind-set that looks beyond the successes of this world, looks beyond the present order of the world. Looks to life in heaven. The new and different mind-set is really the Christian mind-set. It’s much more than positive thinking or steps to a better you. It’s a mind-set that glories in Christ and revels in daily repentance and faith. That’s the mind-set Paul invites you to imitate, returning each day to your Baptism. It’s also why you can stand firm in the Lord. He’s done everything for you and for your salvation. Your citizenship is in heaven, even now as you walk the way of the cross here on earth.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.