

Trinity 16: Do you have a Christ Mindset?

[Matthew 21: 23-32](#), [Philippians 2: 1-13](#)

It was a great joy to take so many generous gifts of tinned food to the Wirral Foodbank. The gentleman who helped unload the contents of my car asked which church I was from.

“All Saints’, Thornton Hough,” I replied.

There was a pause as he tried to place it.

Suddenly, he smiled and exclaimed, “Oh yes! That’s the church with the pretty blue clock faces!”

I’ve been mulling over this exchange ever since. It certainly made me think about how different people see our church and the features which really make it stand out. It challenged my assumption about All Saints’ church most memorable feature being the church spire, which imposes itself upon the skyline from many different directions. The man had remembered the colourful, beautiful and practical detail of the clock faces. We were thinking of the same building, but were looking at it entirely differently.



I found this different perspective very refreshing. However, different ways of seeing things can create tension. Living or working alongside people who have a different attitude to such aspects as keeping things clean, time-keeping or money matters can be particularly stressful for both parties. These are not trivial matters. For instance, for someone who values punctuality, another person having a very relaxed attitude to timekeeping can become a source of simmering resentment. Equally, the person who is less concerned about time may find the other’s demands bordering on bullying.

Each of us has a different mindset, a way of seeing the world and our relationships. Past experience, learning and relationships can help to shape our mindset. For the most part, if our approaches to life and our values have enabled us to navigate our way through life without too many unhappy incidents so far, we carry on living with that mindset.

We can train ourselves to change our mindset: many schools try to encourage students to adopt a “growth mindset”, in which setbacks are re-framed as opportunities to learn and develop resilience. This can have a very positive impact, breaking damaging cycles of fear of failure and low self-confidence. Yet there is much here about the *self*; self-sufficiency and personal growth. We are called to be in relationship – with one another and with Christ.

Paul’s letter to the Philippians encourages us to build relationships not out of “selfish ambition or vain conceit” but to “have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” Paul knew that the Christians at the new church at Philippi would like to think that they did indeed have that Christ mindset, but he urges them to look again.

Who were they serving? Who or what really *was* their master? How did this inform their behaviour towards others?

Now instead of “they”, where we can leave the Philippians resting at a safe distance in time, culture and place, what happens when I ask those questions of myself, and our church today?

The mindset of Christ begins in love. Love for God the Father, love for others, which puts others and their needs first. He showed the ultimate love in “becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!” for each of us. The story doesn’t stop there: God’s love is poured out on us continuously, and we are called to pour it out again for others continuously.



One of our hymns for today is a prayer for this indwelling of Christ’s mind and love, in which the penultimate verse runs: “May the love of Jesus fill me, as the waters fill the sea; him exalting, self abasing – this is victory. ”

May the mindset of Christ enable us to delight in the bigger, richer vision afforded by listening and sharing with one another, for that delight in and with one another as we live out the love of Christ

is what “self abasing” means. When we contemplate our church building and what it signifies, can we hold on to the image of the pretty blue clock faces as well as the imposing spire which is seen across the miles and be enriched by that bigger picture?

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