**12-8-19 (Second Advent)**

 **Being of the Same Mind as Christ**

**By Rev. Sheryl Stewart**

Isaiah 11: 1-10 Romans 15: 4-13 Matthew 3: 1-12

RR: Psalm 72: 1-7, 18 & 19

**Summary: Having the same mind as Christ not only glorifies God, this also leads to accepting each other.**

 Paul believed that all earlier scriptures were written to give us hope and to encourage us to be of the same mind with each other and Christ. That state leads to two consequences: glorifying God and accepting each other as Christ does. This letter was written for both Jews and Gentiles, who tend to be very divided, often fighting each other in the name of the God who calls them together.

 This is a situation which parallels the tensions in America today. Liberal and conservative, Redneck and Snowflake: people are so divided that many seriously fear another Civil War. I follow much of the rancor surrounding just one issue, the whole transgender rights struggle. We have Christians, evangelical Christians (and I consider myself evangelical) in favor of firing and refusing any, even emergency, medical care to me.

Even in 1989, my own high school would not submit my transcripts to D’Youville College, because I did not graduate with an “F” in my gender slot. Fortunately, I had two prior college degrees with high honors that had no problem sending transcripts. During my Community Health class at nursing school, a local high school refused to let me speak with my team about heart health because of my transition. Luckily, the after-school programs had no such restrictions

One current, evangelical preacher is even on record in favor of having transsexuals stoned, despite what Jesus said and did with the woman caught in adultery. Isaiah’s vision sees peace among cattle and lions, wolves and lambs, and leopards and goats. The cobra and viper will not bite; so why do people still fight each other in the name of the Prince of Peace?

All this is just one issue that divides us. There is immigration and border security, an issue that has escalated to separation of families and holding camps the like of which we have not seen in America since the internment of Japanese American citizens during World War II. There is corporate greed and environmental exploitation of God’s world, resulting in risked extinction of whole species, pollution of drinking waters for whole communities, and a global warming which is denied and exacerbated by many in power. Each issue, bad as they are, is worse when you consider the attitudes the people on both sides have toward each other.

John the Baptist was angry and scornful toward the Pharisees and Sadducees who came for baptism. It is obvious that he would rather have left them to die in Judgment fire, but there is no record that he refused them. That one fact shows us that being of the same mind as Christ goes beyond personal righteousness and glorifying God. Having the same mind as Christ leads to accepting each other. This does not mean a lack of conflict or easy feelings, but it does demand that we live in civil community. Jesus ate with Pharisees, scribes, Sadducees, and lawyers who tried to trip Him up – and this shows the same mind set as Him breaking bread or touching and healing lepers, tax collectors, prostitutes, Samaritans, Gentiles, madmen, and those who are possessed and tormented by demons.

At Thanksgiving, we saw divided families sitting down to eat together all over America. This will happen again in a few short weeks on Christmas Day Let’s begin now to have the same mind toward each other that Christ does, accept each other, and praise God together in a thousand different ways. As this begins to happen, with God’s help, we will – at last – truly give God what He wants for Christmas! Let’s unwrap that present now.