

A New Mindset

By Linda Rex

March 26, 2023, 5th Sunday in Preparation for Easter or Lent—Have you ever noticed the focus of your thought life, what your mind is set on? What occupies your attention day in and day out? In what way does this reflect, or not reflect, who you really are as a redeemed and adopted child of God?

In this season before celebrating Jesus' death and resurrection, we are taking time to consider our need for what Jesus has done, is doing, and will do for our salvation and redemption. When we are honest with ourselves, we know that we often do not live in the truth of who God has declared us to be in his Son Jesus Christ.

But today, let's not focus on the "I am not" of our inner life. Rather, let us attend to the spiritual realities which are true of us in Jesus Christ. The "I Am" of the Old Testament has included us in his "I Am-ness," so to speak, by taking on our human flesh, dying our death, and rising again. The Son of God came to live our life, die our death, and rise again, so that each of us may participate in his own personal relationship with his Father in the Spirit. For this reason, after having ascending to heaven following the resurrection, he sent the Spirit, so that each of us could participate in his own right relationship with his Father, and begin to live into the truth of who we are as God's own beloved child.

With this in view, what are the "I am" characteristics which are true about the real you in Christ by the Spirit? What if you set your mind on these things and attended to them for a while? This is what the apostle Paul was describing in this Sunday's reading in Romans 8:6-11. Focusing on the "I am not" desires and inclinations of our inner self turns us away from the truth Jesus has worked into our human flesh through his life, death, and resurrection. Focusing on the "I am" desires and inclinations brings life and peace.

And it's not just about what's going to happen when we die. Rather, it is about living right now the real *zōē* life in which we were created to dwell. Created in the image of a God who lives as Father, Son, and Spirit in other-centered self-giving love, we are created to love God and love one another, to live in right relationship with God and each other. Redeemed by the supreme sacrifice of that love expressed in Jesus Christ, we receive the gift of participating in that life now and forever as we open ourselves up to the indwelling presence and power of God through Christ in the Spirit.

Because of what Jesus Christ has done, and because of his gift from the Father of the Holy Spirit, we are immersed even now in the midst of God's love. Each moment, we are given another gift from God of being able to turn away from our self-centered, self-willed focus and to turn back into face-to-face relationship with our Father, his Son, and his Spirit. Because of Christ, and all he has done, is doing by his Spirit, and will do when he returns in glory, we can say yes to a new mindset and new focus for our lives. By the Spirit, we can come alive, embracing our new life in Christ and the peace that passes all understanding. And we can spend our lives each day in simple gratitude, living in and soaking up God's love, and sharing it with others.

Father, Jesus, Spirit, thank you for including us in your own life and love, allowing us to participate in what you are doing in this world. Grant us the grace to focus on who you have declared us to be and what you are doing in us and in our lives, through Jesus and by your Spirit. Amen.

"To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed

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it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.” Romans 8:6–11 NRSV

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