

There is a story about a farmer who wanted to sell his mule so he put the add in the local paper. One day a man from another community came to the farm. The two farmers got to talking and eventually they got around to talking about the mule.

The farmer who wanted to buy the mule asked if the mule was a good worker. The reply was that the mule did a day's work. The next question that was asked is did the mule obey every command. The owner said yes. The farmer asked if they could hitch the mule up to see how he worked. The owner said no problem.

They got the mule into his harness and the farmer took the reigns and told the mule giddy-up. The mule just stood there. The farmer tried a couple of more times and still the mule didn't move. He looked at the owner and said, "I thought you told me this mule obeys."

"He does," says the owner, who then picked up a 2x4 and walked to the front where he was facing the mule. He then hit the mule as hard as he could with the 2x4. He then walked back and said to the farmer, "Try again." The farmer did and the mule obeyed.

The owner said, "This mule always obeys, but you have got to get his attention first."

As I bring this series on having the mind of Christ to a conclusion, I am aware that for many the concept of being fully surrendered to God has apparently been painful for you. I have heard it in conversations I have read it in notes and emails and I have seen it in your faces.

Without apology I have to tell you that full surrender to God has always been His standard and it has never changed. The church has weakened it, religion has changed it, philosopher, theologians and church leaders have changed and weakened it but in reality God's standard has never changed. So we have to deal with it.

Can one person make a difference in our world? It is an awfully big place with billions of people that most of us never encounter or think about. Somewhere inside all of us is a feeling and desire that our lives ought to count for something.

A most amazing thought is that every one of us has the potential to make a difference to God. Think about that for moment. There are at least five passages of scripture in the Old Testament that suggest that God needs us to carry out His plans.

"Run up and down every street in Jerusalem," says the LORD. "Look high and low; search throughout the city! If you can find even one just and honest person, I will not destroy the city.
Jeremiah 5:1

God was looking for just one righteous person but Jeremiah couldn't find one. Is this because we don't have the potential of being righteous? I don't think so or God wouldn't be looking for

someone. He expects and wants us to be 100% His so that He can use us. I wish we could just see that and embrace it.

“I looked for someone who might rebuild the wall of righteousness that guards the land. I searched for someone to stand in the gap in the wall so I wouldn’t have to destroy the land, but I found no one. Ez. 22:30

In this passage God says that the priests can no longer tell the sacred from the profane. They sanctify the profane and profane the holy. They claim to have a word from God but God hasn’t given them a word. God was looking for just one redemptive person so that He could change the circumstances.

God has put in our hands the power to resist Him. That very power, if it is turned around, can change God’s circumstances. Let me illustrate this from Isaiah 50. Listen to God’s plaintive words:

Why was no one there when I came? Why didn’t anyone answer when I called? Is it because I have no power to rescue? Isaiah 50:2 NLT

He goes on to say that there is nothing wrong with His power but that His power is limited by the people themselves. It’s an amazing and awesome concept that we should do our best to grasp as we endeavor to put our lives together according to God’s plan.

God is all-powerful but there are times when our Omnipotent God looks for and needs a man or woman to carry out His will on earth. In times of crisis He looks for men and women to carry out His will. In good times and bad times He looks for men and women to carry out His plan. To represent Himself on this earth and in people’s lives. We have been looking at that for many weeks. He calls us to be holy. He calls us to live holy lives. He calls us to match our Friday night living with our Sunday morning living. He calls us to be clean before Him.

The result of living with the mind of Christ? He will use us beyond our wildest and most imaginative thoughts.

1. We are called to intervene in this world on behalf of God

Obviously the answer to whether one person can make a difference in the world is a resounding yes but we have to discover what kind of person God uses.

In Isaiah 59:15-16 we read these words: *The LORD looked and was displeased to find there was no justice. ¹⁶ He was amazed to see that no one intervened to help the oppressed. So he himself stepped in to save them with his strong arm, and his justice sustained him.*

The word intervene here can be translated intercede as well. In principle it literally means “a person who causes two other persons to meet.” God is always looking for someone who can bring a righteous God to a sinful world and the people in it and cause them to come together.

This same phraseology is used in the Old Testament references to the work of Jesus Christ in our world. It was in Christ that we are “caused to meet” the answer to our need for redemption. It was Christ coming to earth to take on Himself the responsibility to bring God to us in a way we could understand and accept.

When God looked for someone to intervene on man’s behalf he was amazed that He could find no one and so He sent His Son to make bare His mighty arm on our behalf. (verse 1) The arm of the Lord is one that we should know.

According to Isaiah 53,

Who has believed our message? To whom has the LORD revealed his powerful arm? ² My servant grew up in the LORD’s presence like a tender green shoot, like a root in dry ground.

There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.

³ He was despised and rejected—a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care.

⁴ Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows^[a] that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! ⁵ But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed. ⁶ All of us, like sheep, have strayed away. We have left God’s paths to follow our own. Yet the LORD laid on him the sins of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed and treated harshly, yet he never said a word. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. And as a sheep is silent before the shearers, he did not open his mouth. ⁸ Unjustly condemned, he was led away.^[b] No one cared that he died without descendants, that his life was cut short in midstream.^[c] But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people.

⁹ He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man’s grave.

¹⁰ But it was the LORD’s good plan to crush him and cause him grief. Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants.

He will enjoy a long life, and the LORD’s good plan will prosper in his hands.

¹¹ When he sees all that is accomplished by his anguish, he will be satisfied. And because of his experience, my righteous servant will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

So far as this world can tell Jesus was a failure. What we call “power” God calls weakness and what we call weakness God calls “power.”

God looks for men and women who will intervene in this world on His behalf.

2. We are called to be involved in God's story on the earth

Being involved in God's story on this earth will always involve self-sacrifice. Jesus of course is our model. Remember we are pursuing the mind of Christ. There are a couple of metaphors used to describe Jesus; one is a Lion and the other is a Lamb. Listen to the words of Revelation 5:

Then I saw a scroll^[a] in the right hand of the one who was sitting on the throne. There was writing on the inside and the outside of the scroll, and it was sealed with seven seals. ² And I saw a strong angel, who shouted with a loud voice: "Who is worthy to break the seals on this scroll and open it?" ³ But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll and read it.

⁴ Then I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll and read it. ⁵ But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, "Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne,^[b] has won the victory. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals."

⁶ Then I saw a Lamb that looked as if it had been slaughtered, but it was now standing between the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders.

John had this Revelation and he looked for a Lion but saw a Lamb instead. The Lion of the tribe of Judah was a symbol from David's reign as King of Israel. It was a Lion standing on its hind legs with its paws extended. It was a symbol of power but when Jesus appears on this day He comes as a Lamb. In the Book of Revelation the symbol of Jesus as a lion only appears once but He appears 27 times at least as a Lamb.

He is the epitome of self-sacrifice.

I mentioned in another sermon Romanian Pastor Joseph Tson (Sahn). Because of Communist dictatorships in his country there were no training seminaries or Christian colleges so he knew he would have to study in the west. He also knew this would open his family left behind to persecution, torture and even death. He also was aware that he would be open to harassment when he came home. But he went to England to study. When he was ready to go back to his homeland the Christian Student Group at Cambridge asked him to share about his future.

He told them his fears and what he more than likely would be facing. A young student stood up and said, "This is all very noble of you, willing to go back and expose yourself to persecution, but what are your chances of success?" This was a markedly western thinking kind of question and he panicked wondering how to answer him without appearing to ridicule him.

This is what he said, "What chances of success do I have? I suppose about the same chance of success that a lamb would have if he were surrounded by a pack of ravening wolves. But if the purpose of the lamb is to reveal to the wolves the nature of what it means to be a lamb, perhaps the best way he can do that is just to let the wolves eat him."

Jesus came to a sinful world to let us know what God is like. He knew the hostility in our hearts toward Himself but He came and He let humanity kill Him to show what God's love is like.

Remember John 10? Jesus says, "I am the Good Shepherd" He then went on to explain to His disciples the difference between the Good Shepherd and the other shepherds of Israel. Shepherds tend to their sheep so they can wear their wool in clothing and use the sheep for food or sell them to make a living. But the Good Shepherd according to Jesus, "lays down his life for the sheep."

At the Last Supper, He said, "Take, eat, this is my body. . . Drink from this cup, all of you for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matthew 26)

He shed His blood that we might be clothed in His righteousness. Jesus is the ultimate example of self-sacrificing.

To involve ourselves in God's story on this earth means that we lay down our lives for others. We sacrifice our time and talents and treasures so that men and women may hear the story of the good news.

We get involved in the lives of our neighbors and friends so that they might hear and see the Good news. We as a church respond to our community in a way that lets them know and see the love of Christ. We do this by sacrificing.

3. We are called to intercede with God for people in our spheres of influence

The key to our salvation is always in somebody else. Our salvation was grounded and founded in Christ but what made it possible? When God came to the place that He cared more about you and me than He did about Himself, then our sinful circumstances changed.

And here we come to the heart of the matter. When we care for lost people more than we do ourselves we begin to intercede on their behalf.

No church should ever have to beg for volunteers to carry out the work of God.
No church should ever have to keep reminding their people to tithe so that the work can be done.
No church should ever have to wonder where they can get some new people to start coming to their church.

When the church. . .when individual Christ followers really sell out to God and determine to quit playing around things change. Your life will change. Your family will change. Your home will change. Your work will change. Your community will change. Your world will change.

When we possess the mind of Christ our world will look radically different than it does today. Let me ask you something.

Who are you laboring to bring to Christ?

When was the last time you spend time on your knees interceding on behalf of someone that doesn't know Christ?

When was the last time you carried a burden for an extended period of time for an unsaved love one, or neighbor or co-worker?

When have you given up income or time to share Jesus Christ with others?

Now I want you to stop for a few moments today and think.

Who in your life is waiting on you to be Jesus to them?

Who are you praying for everyday? Who are you taking to Jesus on your knees?

It was 1980 and a family that I've known all my life had a 29 year old son that was a working alcoholic. He was in construction but started everyday nearly drinking his breakfast. He was five years into AA but he couldn't work the program.

His father was a pastor and evangelist. Other siblings were serving the Lord but John could not get over his habit. It was destroying His life. The church began to pray. People began to carry a burden. His pastor would drive by the bar every morning and see his truck and pray for him. His dad fasted for forty days and one Saturday night sitting in the bar he looked at the man next to him and said I'm never coming back here.

He walked out onto the sidewalk and ask the Lord to come into his heart and life. 32 years later he is still serving the Lord. In fact for most of those years he has traveled this Country singing in churches and concerts glorifying God with his life.

Some people prayed. Some people cared. His pastor at the time was with me in Africa last week and told this story to about 300 African pastors. God moved on our hearts. I sat there and wondered how much we care for lost people. I mean really care enough to spend our lives on bringing people to Christ.

Cards