

When in Rome: A Renewed Mind

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[0:00] So the next 45 minutes to two hours will be a review of all the photos. No. I actually sat down and thought, well, I want to share maybe a dozen photos.

And I thought, but which photos? Dear Lord, what do I do? So I decided not to share any. Wait, what? So two things. Coffee with a pastor is on Tuesday morning.

So I can bring photos or I can be open to you asking me whatever you want to know. Because we did lots. And we have almost no regrets.

We were talking about it on the way to church this morning. But we have a couple that I can share with you. And was it amazing? Yes. Was it exhausting? Absolutely.

So we feel recharged and refreshed, but also not. But it is very good to be back. We've been dealing with vehicles and navigating insurance.

[1:00] Still related to our August basement flooding. So I got thrown right back in head first to all of that. But boy, can we confirm for you that jet lag is real.

So I did lots of research. You know me. I like to research things. So I did lots of research. And oh yeah, the way there, the way overseas when you lose time is more painful than coming home.

And so when you head back west, you gain time. And it's actually not that bad. Wrong, dead wrong. The way there, we were shocked, was almost nothing.

So granted, we couldn't sleep on the plane. So for eight hours, we just sat staring at the backs of our seats. But really, aside from a bumpy first day, which we packed with things we probably wouldn't do again, only because rest would have been good.

But coming back home was brutal, is brutal. So my first morning, after we got back, began at 1 a.m.

[2:09] Day started. Brain goes, let's go. And I said, please no. So then my next morning was much better. It was 2.30.

And consistently since then, it's been about 5. So I'm an early morning person, which is the saving grace in all of this. But oh boy, is it not very easy.

And I still have my phone set up with the different world times. So I look and go, good morning, London, because I'm still on London time, apparently. So we experience God in many, many unexpected ways.

And I'm not just saying that as a pastor. I'm not just saying that because I think that's what you want to hear. But we even worshipped with brothers and sisters in Christ in Scotland, in Glasgow, at a church, and had communion together October 4th while you were having communion together here.

So this trip was a blessing in more ways than we can name. Michelle's got lots of things that she could tell you about. I've got lots that I could tell you about. Lots of things we did a little bit separately and lots of things we did together.

[3:23] We checked lots of bucket list things off. And there were things on that list that we didn't even realize had suddenly appeared there. We have more pictures and videos and stories than any sane person would ever want to look at.

And even friends and family probably won't ever endure that with us. So I will share some highlight pictures next week.

I wanted to think more about how many and what the really key highlights are that I wanted to share. So we'll do that. But the thing I want to leave you with this morning before we continue, who tracks their steps when they walk?

Who has a health app? A few people, right? So I don't know if you can see all that. So I'll give you some highlights. That's the two weeks we were away. So you see, the first day was like, nah, we're on a plane.

Let's wander around a little bit. And then it went insane. And we kept thinking, oh, we'll never outdo. Oh, we just outdid it. We'll never walk further than, oh, we just did.

[4:28] So between September 28th and October 11th, we walked 190,601 steps.

It is too much, Carol. So just to wrap your head around it, that's just over 84 and a half miles or 136 kilometers.

For reference, everyone's still in shock. Good thing we have an AED in the foyer. So for reference, the distance between Edmonton and Red Deer, any guesses?

Roughly? 140? It is 150 kilometers. So for the record, we will never be walking to Red Deer.

However, there's the context for you. So this morning, we're picking up in our sermon series, When in Rome.

[5:30] And we're making our way through the book of Romans. So we are closing in, believe it or not, on the end of this series. And our sermon this morning is titled, A Renewed Mind.

And it's actually anchored in Romans 12, 16. So if you want to turn to Romans 12, 16, or you can listen. Romans 12, 16 says, Live in harmony with one another.

Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Romans 12, verse 16.

So as we've been reminded a few times over the course of our study in Romans, the Christian life is intended to be a transformed life.

Right? We've heard that many times. Romans 12, verse 2 tells us that it shouldn't be, we shouldn't be people who are conformed to the things of this world.

[6:29] Or what the world values and prioritizes. And I think we can all agree, we've talked about this before. The priorities of the world do not generally align with the priorities of the Christian walk.

So we need to have a life that seeks to demonstrate that God's way and his path for humanity, his intended path for us, is simply better.

Over time, we've also recognized that the Christian life requires a renewing of our minds. We've talked a bit, shared a bit about what that means. But what does it mean?

Let's look at that again. Well, renewing our minds means learning and focusing on God's will for us, not our own will. Not the things that the world tells us are valuable or are best for us.

And so then by seeking God's will and focusing on that, it becomes then possible for our minds and our lives to be transformed.

[7:35] So this morning, I want to look a little bit at what are some of the indications of a renewed mind. Well, Romans 12, verse 16 indicates that a renewed mind or attitude is one that should simply characterize Christians.

A renewed mind or attitude must be directly related to who we are as followers of Christ. So we're going to take a closer look at what kinds of things we should be able to observe in a Christian, in Christian communities, when people's minds have been truly transformed and renewed.

So first, a renewed mind should exhibit sameness. What the heck does that mean? Well, the New King James translation words it well, I think, because it says, be of the same mind toward one another.

So almost literally, thinking the same thing. And that doesn't mean we're robots, right? It doesn't mean, yeah, that sounds good to me. I believe that too. But that we are so aligned with Christ and so aligned with one another that we think, act, and believe the same things consistently and with conviction.

So let's take a look at some places in Scripture where we see this directive given to early Christians. Just going to pause here for a second. And so the service that we attended October 4th in Glasgow, the pastor, the preacher, had no slides.

[9:11] So he had one kind of main—it wasn't even a title slide, as I recall. And so then I thought to myself, do people care about slides? Because I wasn't disengaged in what he had to say.

Now, again, pastor, right? So I'm listening from that lens as well. But is it helpful to you when I put things up on the screen? Does it help you stay focused, stay anchored, get the highlights?

Okay, good. Because I'm not going to do it if it's not meaningful or helpful for you. So message received. Got it. So a renewed mind should exhibit sameness.

Well, let's take a look at some of these places, as I said. So in Romans 15, verse 5, Paul told the Christians in Rome—this was his audience— May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had.

In 2 Corinthians 1, verse 10, Paul is speaking to the Christians in Corinth. And he says this, Thanks, Paul.

[10:36] Not always easy as said as done, right? But it's the goal that we strive towards. He said several things to the Christians in Philippi.

Now, I wonder if the Christians in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada would get lots of directives from Paul as well. We probably would. Philippians 1, 27 says, Philippians 2, verses 2 and 3 says this.

It's picking up partly through the statement here. Then make my joy complete by being like-minded. Paul says it will give him joy to know that his brothers and sisters are like-minded.

Having the same love, Paul says, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourself.

Philippians 4, verse 2 says this. I plead with Judea and plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. He's talking about a very specific example of his own ministry.

[12:08] He pleads that God would give them a unified mind as they serve him together. In 1 Peter 3, 8, we read this message given to the Christians in Asia.

Finally, all of you be like-minded. Be sympathetic. Love one another. Be compassionate and humble.

So it seems like pretty consistent messaging Paul has, right? That he's emphasizing through the early Christian church. Do you see that? Given those directives, then, were never rescinded, right? Nobody ever came along and said, oh yeah, well, Paul said, nah, we got something different. Never rescinded, folks. So do you think they may still apply to the church now?

Good that everyone agrees. So as Christians are renewed in their minds, then, and seeking unity with each other, it also then makes perfect sense that we, I'll say we now, will begin to have similar goals, similar aims, similar views, the similar hate for evil that we talk about, hate for sin.

[13:25] And all those things, then, will be aligned under the will of God, right? So this is not our own agenda, again. This is God's will driving our sense of unity, our sense of sameness and consistency and cohesion.

And then, so how is that possible, right? We often wonder these things. What's the practical way I can look at this? Philippians 2, verse 5 reminds us this.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. It's a standard, right? Do you fail to meet the standard of Christ Jesus?

I do it all the time. I saw a video this week where it was a pastor, Christian, obviously.

Pastor helps to be a Christian. But he said this. He said, I am striving every day to purge the negativity from my thoughts, my words.

[14:35] He said, I try to think of how Jesus sees people. And then if I am a follower of Christ, if I am a shepherd of one of Christ's flocks around the world, that needs to be my standard so that I can communicate it to others, so that I can be an example in my own life.

I am a complainer. I complain when I have to wait. You've heard me say that before. I complain when something isn't fairly prompt.

So that's the standard I have for myself. I try not to be late. I try to do 110% of what I can do. I will put myself last in every situation.

But it's not what Jesus calls us to do. We're to follow his example, though. And what does that mean? Well, it doesn't mean perfectionism. It doesn't mean being critical of others when, oh, I'm such a good person, but they're clearly not.

It means loving what God loves. And God loves all people. Whether someone follows Christ or not, God created them and he loves them. Period.

[15:53] He also calls us to hate what God hates. Do you ever listen to the Holy Spirit in your mind, in your heart, when you're doing something that, do you ever get that sense that, wow, maybe this isn't the best use of my time.

Maybe I shouldn't be watching this, reading this, saying this, laughing at this, repeating this. We got to listen to the Spirit. I'm telling you.

Each of us should also be seeking to have more and more of a Christ-like mindset. Again, it's not a standard of perfectionism we're seeking. But it's one of care, one of consideration, one of love, one of putting other people first.

And it's what mature followers of Jesus Christ must do, must exhibit. And if we do it with joy, it is really not much of a chore at all.

Because the more we become aligned with Christ in our minds, the more we become aligned with other followers of him, who, ideally, should also be seeking him as well.

[17:07] It's like musical instruments to me. When things are in tune and resonating together, it feels joyful. When things are discordant and chaotic, not a lot of joy, right?

Colossians 3, 1 to 2, says this, Since then, you've been raised with Christ. Set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. So as we've just heard there, part of this process of maturing in our journey as followers of Christ is setting our minds on things above. Focusing our thoughts and attention on spiritual things. Focusing more on things of this world and worrying about other things and what people think of us or don't think of us tends to pull us away from God.

Have you ever noticed that? If you're worrying about things that frankly will never happen, I'm talking to myself, am I losing focus on God? Absolutely.

[18:20] And then we recognize as we lose our focus on God that it begins to drain our peace. It drains our joy. It makes us far more likely to become bitter and jaded and critical.

Generally, I think the root of disunity or disharmony comes when someone, perhaps everyone in a situation, is not setting their minds on Christ.

Not setting their minds on the things that truly matter. And our focus passage for this morning seems to highlight another characteristic of a renewed mind.

It suggests that we're not to be proud or conceited. We're to be willing to associate, it says, associate with people of low position.

I got friends in low places. So second then, a renewed mind should exhibit lowliness. Now I'm not saying bow and scrape, but what does it mean to have a lowly mind in this context of scripture?

[19:27] What does it mean to have a lowly mind and be willing to associate with everyone? I'll tell you, on our trip, your very introverted pastor was teased by the other three people on the trip with him for how friendly he was and how much he talked to strangers.

So they lost me a few times and would have to backtrack and say, what are you doing? And I said, oh, just talking to this person. And Michelle said on the way to church this morning, she said, I'm not sure what was so fascinating about that woman in that gift shop in Glasgow.

And I said, she had lived in Africa for 18 months. And I said, she's glad to be back home in Glasgow. And she's like, whatever, dude, we got stuff to do.

But it was interesting to me because it must have been God opening my eyes to seeing people in every situation, to just recognizing everybody has a story.

And you've heard me say that many times. Everyone has a story. And I was just craving to hear people's stories. Lowliness of mind ultimately means having a humble attitude.

[20:44] It means having a modest view of your own importance, sometimes easier said than done, and seeking to be completely free of pride or conceit.

So I looked at how a couple of Bible translations approach this because I think it helps to get a little more clarity. And I looked at a couple of commentaries as well. The New King James Version puts it this way.

Do not set your mind on high things. The RSV says, do not be haughty. How often do you use haughty?

I don't use it often. Commentaries offer other perspectives, though. They say, do not be ambitious. Don't aspire to eminence.

Although now I think I may have my brothers call me not only very Reverend Dixon, but also your eminence, very Reverend Dixon. Don't become snobbish, another one I read said.

[21:43] The New King James Version says, but associate with the humble. The RSV there says, associate with the lowly. So I think what it's getting at here is we're not better than anyone else.

Does that sound fair? Do you view yourself that way? Friends, a renewed mind makes a conscious and deliberate effort to not be snobbish or ambitious.

How contrary is that to the world in which we live? Don't be ambitious. Well, you'll never get anywhere. I knew you'd be a terrible disappointment. You've wasted your life.

That's not a priority for the kingdom of God. Not at all. Lowly people aren't we all lowly people? It's fascinating to me that we have to be reminded of things like this, right?

This should be standard operating procedure for us as followers of Christ, but we all need to be reminded. Why? Because we're sinful human beings.

[22:52] That's why. So I'm actually glad that we have some examples of people from Scripture who have accomplished this approach, right? We learn it's not impossible.

Psalms 131, verses 1 and 2 says, maybe you've heard of David, my heart is not proud, Lord. My eyes are not haughty.

I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me, but I have calmed and quieted myself. I'm like a weaned child with its mother.

Like a weaned child, I am content. Can you feel content this morning and in every day of your life? In his very vulnerable writing here, David conveys his goal is to have the same mind and attitude that pleases God.

He is seeking after God. Jeremiah 45, verse 5 says this, Should you then seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them, for I will bring disaster on all people, declares the Lord.

[24:08] But wherever you go, I will let you escape with your life. The prophet Jeremiah warned a man named Baruch about the very real dangers of exactly what we've been talking about this morning.

Don't think too highly of yourself. Luke 22, verses 24 to 27. A lot of scripture this morning. It says this, Luke 22, 24 to 27.

A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. You know this story. Jesus said to them, The kings of the Gentiles lorded over them, and those who would exercise authority over them called themselves benefactors.

But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.

For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

[25:23] Jesus himself taught on this issue. He gave specific examples of his teaching in practice. Jesus and his disciples spoke about and lived out what a humble and servant-oriented mind and attitude looked like.

We see it throughout the New Testament. Friends, when a person truly has the mind of Christ, their humility and desire to serve others will show, demonstrate what their goals look like.

It will demonstrate as well, be demonstrated, I should say, in the company they keep. So third and finally, a renewed mind should exhibit humility.

Well, maybe that's self-explanatory, but just in case it's not. So what does that mean in this context particularly? The New King James frames it this way.

I love this. Do not be wise in your own eyes. It just nails it. A few other translations say don't think too highly of yourselves and don't think you know it all.

[26:37] That's the Living Bible. That was my mom's favorite translation. Don't think you know it all. You should get shirts made. Jesus said, don't think you know it all.

But it suggests not being conceited in our thinking, not being conceited in the way we speak or our attitudes towards other things, not acting or behaving like we know better because we don't.

Scripture also warns us about this very thing in other places. Proverbs 3 verse 7 says, do not be wise in your own eyes. There's that message again. Fear the Lord and shun evil.

Proverbs 26 verse 12. Maybe we should do a Proverbs sermon series. Do you see a person wise in their own eyes? ready?

There's more hope for a fool than for them. When we know what's right and do what's wrong, heaven help us. There are important words there, I think, from the wise and insightful Solomon.

[27:46] Isaiah 5 21 says this, woe to those, woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.

Right? I'm not a pulpit pounder, but that was a pulpit pound and moment if there ever was one. Woe to those, right? Have pity on us if we are like that.

prophet Isaiah recognized the danger and he literally grieved over it. I want to preach to Isaiah too if everybody's game for that. What if I die and I'll just run out of time?

I've got a list of things that I want to work through. 1 Corinthians 3 18 says this, do not deceive yourselves. Woe. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise.

Foolish in the sight of the world could be wise in the sight of your God. The Apostle Paul really cautioned his audience then and now about this.

[28:58] A renewed mind is one that maintains a strong sense of humility. An awareness that every one of us, every one of us still has a lot to learn from God and from others.

So how do we continue to learn? Well, Google that. No, no, don't Google it. Hopefully, we continue to learn by spending time in Scripture.

Do you read your Bible every day? Do you read your Bible most days? Do you read your Bible when it's on the screen on Sundays? Food for thought.

1 Corinthians 8 verse 2 says this, Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know.

You know? Bless you. 1 Corinthians 1 20 says this, Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law?

[30:03] Where is the philosopher of this age? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world? Interesting.

Worldly wisdom, friends, maybe you know this, maybe you didn't, is actually considered foolishness to God. Worldly wisdom does not last, despite what many scientists might say to you.

doesn't mean what they believe and what they teach isn't valuable, but it is not eternal. It just cannot be. 1 Corinthians 1 26 says this, I also want to preach to 1 Corinthians, by the way, Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called.

Not many of you were wise by human standards. Not many were influential. Not many were of noble birth. It seems then that the Bible tells us that not many people who are traditionally wise are ultimately all that receptive to the gospel or to a need for God in their lives.

Maybe you've run across that. Some of the most intelligent people, reasonable, rational, great debaters, good thinkers that I have read and studied are atheists.

[31:29] Interesting, right? So I'm extremely wise, but I don't see a need for anything beyond what I can see, touch, feel, whatever. They are so painfully rational that they are grounded in the temporal.

Indeed. 1 Corinthians 1, 27 to 29 says this, I'm sure you know this passage, God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.

God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things, and the things that are not to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.

God's level, painfully level playing field. Welcome to the upside-down kingdom of God, where the meek inherit and the arrogant will be humbled.

Where traditional knowledge and wisdom ultimately do not impress, do not last, but God's glory and power will always prevail. Hopefully we'll also continue to learn with the help of increasing knowledge and experience.

[32:49] That's something else. It's funny, isn't it? I was thinking about this as I was writing this sermon. Sometimes the more you learn, the more you realize how much you don't know.

Lots of nods, lots of smirks. Is that accurate for you? But that's cool in a way because it's God leading you forward to say, yeah, read more, learn more, study more.

But it's humbling, I hope. We're never quite there. That's not to discourage us, that's to say, come, come, there's so much more.

So the older you get as well, I think, and I'm experiencing this. I know everybody here says, oh, you're so young, Pastor Ken, blah, blah. My hip does not agree, my lower spine does not agree, the gray in my beard does not agree with you.

But I think the older we get, the more we realize how little we know as well, right? Isn't that true? I think it's true. But then hopefully we'll also continue to learn by recognizing and following the examples of Jesus himself, who's the greatest teacher we could ever have.

[34:07] Jesus, who was willing to submit to the will of his father. Jesus, who didn't think so highly of himself that he viewed equality with God as something to be exploited for personal gain.

Adopting the mind of Christ will go a long way to help maintaining humility about ourselves and humility in serving and caring for others.

This morning we've spent some time considering the qualities of a renewed mind, and you've heard this phrase over and over and over as we study Romans together, particularly Romans 12.

The sameness of mind, thinking that's aligned both with God and with his people. Humbleness or humility of mind, being open to everyone, not being conceited or prideful as though we know it all. Friends, the more we adopt the mind of Christ and make it our own, the more we'll think the same and have more unified priorities.

[35 : 22] The less we'll be conceited or arrogant and ambitious over the wrong things. The more we'll associate with people who are different from us or less fortunate in their circumstances.

Let God stretch your comfort zone and ultimately the less conceited and arrogant we will be.

Friends, these are the qualities of those who have the mind of Christ.

They should be evident in those who are genuinely submitted to and being transformed by the renewing of their minds. Are we, are you, am I, setting our minds on things as we've been directed to do, both as individuals and as a church body?

If we've been raised with Christ and reborn into a new life with Him, as I believe the majority of us have been, simply put, that is both our calling and our duty.

Amen.