

Augustana College  
Chapel of Reconciliation

Pr. Paul Rohde

Learning the Mind of Christ

20 April 2011  
Holy Wednesday

Philippians 2: 1-11

Albert Einstein said, "I want to know the mind of God. All the rest is details."

St. Paul writes, "Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus." It's one thing to seek the mind of Christ; another to hear that it is to be empty, humble, obedient, and finally even to die. I want to explore what it is to have *this* mind. What does the emptying mean—the emptying of Christ for us? And the call to empty ourselves?

It seems to me we use the term "know" for many different things. What would it mean to articulate layers of knowing the mind of Christ?

If we sought the mind of a skydiver, for example, we could take a class on skydiving. We'd know something of skydiving. Probably we'd know which strap on the parachute to pull and we'd have at least a theory about when to pull it. I'm guessing we'd know something about positioning our feet, bending our knees, etc. for landing. We'd take the test, ace it, of course, and have the mind of a skydiver. Right? Or is there more?

To have the mind of a skydiver, probably we need to talk about the day the instructor says, "How many of you are ready to jump on Tuesday? If before we spoke of knowledge in our heads, not it's knowing in our will, intention, and participation. To have the mind of a skydiver, one needs to say "I want to jump."

And then, of course, comes Tuesday. We would find ourselves in an airplane. They open the door and say "Now!" Wouldn't most of agree that only then would you have the mind of a skydiver? I press to that moment because I think there's a crucial and compelling reversal that happens in moments like that—you may have carried what you know about skydiving into the airplane, but when you jump out what you know carries you.

On one hand, with Albert Einstein and others, we want to know the mind of God. Paul, however, is after the mind of Christ knowing us. So today I want to press it until we know mind of Christ carrying us and carrying us together. It's valid and important to know the story on any level. We may know intellectually that the Gospel is for life's freefalls. But until we have catapulted through one, I think we don't really know or perhaps even hear.

A story:

In mid-January, 2010, our family was very focused on the weather. Our nephew, the first of his generation, was to be married in Minneapolis. We all wanted to get there. We listened to the news often. While waiting for weather forecasts, we learned that there had been a cataclysmic earthquake in Port Au Prince, Hayti. While I can tell you, I knew an earthquake had happened; I was much more focused on whether a blizzard would happen in Minnesota.

We were headed east somewhere in Minnesota, when our daughter called to tell us that our friends, Jon, Ben and Renee Larson were in Hayti. Jon is a dear friend, chapel president here in 2006-07, one of the warmest, most gentle spirits I've ever known. A great musician, kind, witty, talented. . . like so many of you, the young adults we're given to know that make life hopeful, joyful, good. Jon, his cousin Ben, and his wife, Renee, were seniors at Wartburg Seminary, recently approved for ordination in the ELCA. At the first phone call, Sarah knew only that Jon and Renee were accounted for but that Ben was missing.

I'm embarrassed to attempt to describe my reaction. I had known the earthquake had been terrible, that tens, even hundreds of thousands were dead, injured and homeless. But in this flash of a moment, I stood in new relationship to this news. I felt the fear of the loss of a friend. . . and the anguish of one who is as close to me as my nephew. I ached for all the people in anguish to know what had happened. This yearning became tangible as Sarah called again and again, every few minutes with a shard of an update, or another pang of grief she needed to express. Or simply because she couldn't stand the silence. I count myself a compassionate, globally conscious person. I learned anew how readily I could deny pain of others, until that pain was striking those I love.

Ben perished. Jon and Renee have been remarkably, courageously candid about their grief. They've been interviewed twice on MPR. Step by step, they've leaned into widespread support from Haitian neighbors, the Doctors without Borders folks who helped them get back to the states, and the hundreds, maybe thousands of folks who yearn to support them. Somehow they've managed to speak—both privately and publically—if even to say that there are no words to describe what they faced.

One of the things Jon has said is how unspeakably grateful he is for community that knows and is called to live the story of cross and resurrection. On many levels he has known the story of Jesus since his childhood. He carried it in Bible camp ministry, on campus, in the Augie choir. That he was in Hayti already speaks volumes about living the mind of Christ beyond self or comfort.

Now he knows how desperately he needs a story. . . and its power to carry him. He's grateful to know the cross; more grateful to know that the cross knows his depths. That Jesus knows emptiness. And that people called to the mind of Christ grope with him. . . in emptiness, through the depths. The mind of Christ calls and unites community and church to embody the love of God willing to be present in the depths, to carry the cross, to hope against all rationality that life heal and rise. The mind of Christ is the power here to move—one halting step at a time.

I sent the first draft of this sermon to Jon. I had asked his permission to tell the story, but wanted to test whether my words were accurate for him. Jon appreciated the application but wrote mostly about how hard it is that the truth continues—his profound grief and his awareness that brokenness and trauma and pain and grief continue. He had just returned from a funeral for a pastor killed by his own son.

Is this not having the mind of Christ—to live beyond what we fear and what we can fix? To go to Hayti or next door, to step into what look like freefalls for the sake of neighbor, to bend the knee in presence and participation? This has to be bearing the cross, but is it not also the cross bearing us? And the more we listen, the more we know in the cataclysmic freefalls of life that the Gospel carries us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# HOLY COMMUNION

Wednesday, April 20, 2011

**Prelude**                    *“O Man, Bewail Thy Grievous Fall”*                    J.S. Bach

**Welcome/announcements**

**Invocation**

**Confession and Forgiveness**                    ELW p. 95

**Prayer**

**Hymn**                    *“Where Charity and Love Prevail”*                    ELW #359 vv. 1-3

**Scripture**                    Philippians 2: 5-11

**Sermon**                    *Learning the Mind of Christ*                    Pr. Paul

**Hymn**                    *“Where Charity and Love Prevail”*                    ELW #359 vv. 4, 5

**Holy Communion**                    Dr. Laurie Jungling, presider  
Special Music                    *“Ave verum”*                    by Philip Stopford  
Augustana Choir

Hail, true body of Christ, born of the Virgin Mary,  
Who truly suffered, sacrificed on the cross for mankind.  
From whose pierced side flowed water and blood;  
Be our consolation in death’s ordeal.  
O Jesus, sweet Jesus, O Jesus, holy Jesus, son of Mary,  
Have mercy on us. Amen.

## Blessing and Benediction

**Postlude**                    *“In paradisum”* from *Requiem*                    by Gabriel Fauré  
Augustana Choir

May the angels lead you into paradise,  
may the martyrs receive you in your coming,  
and may they guide you  
into the holy city, Jerusalem.  
May the chorus of angels receive you  
and with Lazarus once poor  
may you have eternal rest.

## CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

**CHRIST WALK** - Augustana Campus Ministry invites students, staff and community members to an Easter Christ Walk. This promises to be a moving passion play! **We will begin at the chapel at 6:30 pm, TODAY, Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup>.** Brought to you from the creators of the Christmas Play. Everyone is welcome....bring a friend or two!

**ANTI-BULLYING WORKSHOP** - SD communities can join together to prevent tragedies due to bullying and cruel, disrespectful behaviors. Attend a FREE evening with **Dr. Carl Pickhardt** and **Shane Windmeyer, M.Ed** as they discuss bullying in communities and schools, gay and lesbian issues, and promoting environments of respect and safety. **Thur., Apr. 28, 7-9:00 pm, Our Savior's Lutheran**

**AN AUGUSTANA PILGRIMAGE** - Thursday, April 28 at 3 pm. Meet on the east side of Old main for this reflective walk around campus. We'll discover artists beneath the artifacts, stories and spirit that sustain Augie for 150 years! Everyone is welcome!

**SOUTH DAKOTA SYNOD ASSEMBLY, June 10-11, 2011, Sioux Falls.** We need two delegates from the student congregation, a man and a woman, to represent us at the synod assembly. All expenses are paid...a great opportunity to see and hear the church active around and beyond congregations! See Pr. Paul or Carol if you are interested. Preference will be given to students from the S Dak. Synod, ELCA.

**CAMP COUNSELOR COMMISSIONING SERVICE** - There will be a commissioning service to bless summer camp counselors on **Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, at 10 am.** If you and someone you know is planning to work at a camp, please let Carol in the chapel office know. The Admission Office is providing all the counselor with brand new long-sleeved Augie t-shirts and the Fin. Aid office has \$500 scholarships available!

### CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Wednesday (20<sup>th</sup>) Christ Walk - 6:30 pm - Start at the chapel

EASTER BREAK - Fri., 22<sup>nd</sup> - Monday, 25<sup>th</sup>.

Wednesday (27<sup>th</sup>) Morning Worship, 10 am - Peg Preston, Hist. Dept.

Friday (29<sup>th</sup>) Morning Worship, 10 am - Brianna Weigel, Sr. Spkr.