

The 10th Sunday after Pentecost ~ Sunday, August 17, 2025
“Living the Great Commandment ~ With All Our Mind”
Philippians 4:4-9

This morning we continue our series, “Living the Great Commandment.” When asked which commandment was the greatest, Jesus responded, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength...and love your neighbour as yourself.’ No other commandment is greater than these.” (P) Notice He uses the word ‘all?’ In other words, we’re not called to love God with some of our heart, soul, mind, and strength, but with all that we are. When we truly love God this way, and when we seek to love our neighbour as ourselves, we fulfill all the commandments. (P) So far, we’ve looked at loving God with all our heart and all our soul. This morning I want to look at how we can love Him with all our mind. (P) Despite what some critics think about Christianity, God doesn’t want us to check our brains at the door. As human beings, God has blessed us with a mind. He’s given us mental faculties, and created us to be intellectual beings, capable of rational thought, critical thinking, reasoning, and intellectual growth. He also gave us a conscience to guide us in making choices that are morally right, and to help us live our lives in a way that honours Him. Sadly, some people have used this gift to undermine faith and to deny the very existence of God. However, those of us who follow Jesus are called to walk a different path, we’re called to use our intellectual abilities to discern God’s presence around us, to glorify Him, and to deepen our faith and understanding. We can see this throughout Christian history: the Apostle Paul, Augustine, Martin Luther, C. S. Lewis, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Billy Graham, John Stott, Tim Keller, and countless others have all used their intellect to glorify God and strengthen the faith of others. (P) When it comes to our minds, there are 4 things we need to understand. #1. God

knows our thoughts. Psalm 139:2 reads, "You know my thoughts before I think them." (P) Nothing that we think, is hidden from God. Although some people might balk at this, it's actually a good thing. Because God knows our thoughts, He knows what we're going through, and why we do the things we do. He isn't sitting on His throne saying, "What was Chris Doering thinking!" He already knows. Understanding that God knows our thoughts frees us up to bring our thoughts to Him, especially the ones we might try to hide from Him.

(P) #2. God knows our intellectual limitations. Psalm 84:11 reads, "The Lord is fully aware of how limited and futile the thoughts of mankind are." (P) Despite what we might think, we're not God, we're not omnipotent, or all-knowing. Our minds are limited in their ability to reason and understand, and no matter how hard we try, we can't know and understand everything. Isaiah 55:8 puts it this way, "The Lord says, 'My thoughts are not like your thoughts. Your ways are not like my ways.'" (P) It's important that we remember that God is God and we're not, and so, we need to accept by faith the things we don't or can't understand.

(P) #3. Our minds are fallen just like the rest of our human nature, and therefore need to be renewed, or transformed. Our minds are capable of great things. However, as we all know only too well, they're also capable of some not so great things. As such, our mind is often the place of battle, where a war is waged between faith and fear, belief and unbelief, love and hate, good and evil. Sometimes we win this battle and sometimes we lose. And, try as we may, we're incapable of changing the pattern of our thoughts completely on our own. Romans 3:6 reads, "The mind of sinful man is death. But the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace." (P) I don't know about you, but life and peace sure sound a lot better than sin and death. However, the only way we can experience this life and peace, is to dedicate our mind to God, submitting our thoughts to

Him, and allowing Him to change and transform it. As Paul encourages us in Romans 12:1, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (P)

#4. We are responsible for our own thoughts, and can’t blame anyone else. When we turn on a radio, there’s a lot of different frequencies that we can tune into, and we have a choice what station we listen too. The same is true for our mind—there’s a lot of frequencies in here—there’s a lot of thoughts that we can focus, and it’s our choice—we’re responsible for the kinds of things that we entertain in our mind. It’s also important to remember that we’re not our thoughts, and we shouldn’t over identify with them—they’re like clouds passing through our brain. So, how do we tune into the right station? 2 Corinthians 10:5 reads, “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” (P) That’s responsibility, that’s tuning into the right station: taking captive every thought, every argument and pretension that passes through our mind and is not of God, and making it obedient to Christ. This is important because we all struggle with negative, impure, and ungodly thoughts that come into our mind and exert a great amount of control over us. Left untended, these thoughts can do a lot of damage in our lives. One preacher writes, “Renewing the mind is a little like refinishing furniture. It is a two-stage process. It involves taking off the old and replacing it with the new. The old is the lies you’ve learned to tell or were taught by those around you; it’s the attitudes and ideas that have become a part of your thinking, but do not reflect reality. The new is the truth of God as found in His Word. To renew our mind is to allow God to bring to the surface the lies that we’ve mistakenly accepted, and replace them with His truth. To the degree that we do this, our behaviour

will be transformed.” (P) Our thoughts effect our behaviour, and so, the more control we have over them, the more tuned into the things of God we are, and the easier it will be for us to love Him with all our mind. (P) This morning, I want to look at 3 principles that can help us do this.

#1. Loving God with all our mind means fearing Him. (P) Psalm 111:10 puts it quite simply, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding. His praise endures forever.” (P) Many people think that to fear the Lord is to be afraid Him. However, that’s not primarily what Scripture means when it talks about fearing the Lord. ‘Yira,’ the Hebrew word for ‘fear’ is similar to the English ‘honour’ or ‘respect’. Our God is the Holy One, the Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth, and to fear Him is to honour Him, to have a deep respect and reverence for His holiness, goodness, and for the things of His kingdom. The result of living one’s life in the fear of the Lord is the development of a greater disrespect for the things that are **not** of God. In other words, the more I fear God, the more I honour and respect Him, the more I’ll disrespect sin and it’s effect on my life, and the more I’ll seek and embrace the things of the Kingdom over the things of the world, as Jesus calls us to do in our gospel reading. (P) Sin is one of the biggest barriers to loving God because it’s always rooted in our decision to go our own way. And we can’t love God with all that we are—heart, soul, mind, and strength—when we’re trying to go our own way and not His. Not only does sin separate us from God and other people, it also takes the focus off God and puts it on us. When this happens, we no longer live for Him, but for ourselves. Sin tricks us into thinking that we don’t need God, that we know better, that we can get through life on our own and in our own strength. (P) I’m convinced that if I could see my sin as God sees it, even for a moment, I’d let it go. The

problem is, we often look at our sin in light of someone else's, "Yeah, I messed up, but at least I didn't mess up as much as X." Or we see our sin as the world sees it, glamorized by social media, TV, and movies. However, the closer we get to God and His holiness, the more we fear and respect Him, the more we're able to see how our choice to go our own way hurts Him and those around us, and the more likely we are to say, "God, let me see as you see." (P) The Book of Proverbs tells us that many blessings come from fearing the Lord. How much do you fear God? How do you live this fear out in your everyday life?

#2. Loving God with all our mind means focussing on Him. (P) Colossians 3:1-3 reads, "So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (P) If you're hiking and want your compass to work, you have to set it to polar North, if you're playing darts and want to beat your opponent, you've got to set your eye on the bulls eye, in most sports you have to envision the goal long before you shoot, and if you want to drive safely, you've got to set your eyes on the road ahead. Similarly, if we want to love God with all our mind, we have to set our minds on Him, on things above, and not on the things of earth. (P) Think about it: everyday, from the moment we open our eyes until we close them, and sometimes even while we sleep, our mind is fixed on something. Sometimes it's fixed on our problems, worries and fears. Sometimes it's fixed on tasks and all the things we have to do. Sometimes it's fixed on relationship issues, or on our dreams, desires, and ambitions. Sometimes our mind is fixed on the things of the past, good and bad, and sometimes it's fixed on the future. Sometimes it's fixed on the distractions of this world. (P) Although we can't stop our mind from fixing on something, we can have some control over

what it fixes on. Paul encourages us in this passage to make the right choice—to focus our mind on the things of God, or as the NLT put it, “the realities of heaven.” Why? Because the things of heaven are a lot more life giving than the things of earth, and always lead to a good place, bringing a sense of joy, peace, and hope, no matter what might be happening around us. Unfortunately, the same can’t be said for the things below or earthly realities. (P) At the beginning of each day, before you even get out of bed, choose to set your mind on the things above, on the realities of heaven, and not all the other distractions that bombard us on a daily basis. Think about God, His character and attributes, His Word, His promises, and the blessings He’s given you; think about your life and problems in light of eternity. Starting our day this way not only gives us a better perspective on life, but it focuses our minds, and positions us to better love God. (P) One caveat here: if your thoughts have been pulling you in the wrong direction for a long time, causing you to focus on the wrong things, it isn’t going to be easy for you to retrain your mind. It doesn’t happen over night, it takes time and intentionality. The first few times you try this, you may find your mind wandering back to the negative thoughts, as destructive as they might be, because they’re comfortable and what you know. However, it does get easier, as you head in God’s direction because that’s where you were meant to live. As we read in Isaiah 26:3, “You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!” (P) Hebrews 12:1 encourages us to, “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” (P) Where are your eyes fixed? What is your mind focussed on?

#3. Loving God with all our mind meaning filling it with good things. (P) In our first reading, Paul writes, “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any

excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (P) Our mind is like a sponge, it can absorb tonnes of material each day. The question is, what is it absorbing, what are we filling it with? (P) Let me share 3 options with you. #1. We can fill our minds with mental junk food: social media, movies, TV shows, video games –things that although entertaining, might not nurture our spirit. Don’t get me wrong, I enjoy vegging out on the couch and watching TV or scrolling on my phone as much as the next guy, however, my mind needs more. Think about it like this, I love potato chips, however, if I ate them every night, I’d be in trouble. The problem is, we’re so over-worked and over-tired by the busyness of life, that sometimes the easiest thing to do is to fill our mind with mental junk food—it’s easy, entertaining, relaxing and it makes us feel good, at least in the moment. However, at the end of the day, it’s harmful to our spiritual health and well-being. (P) #2. We can fill our minds with mental drugs. What I mean by that is addictive, negative thoughts that we constantly think about and fixate on. However, things like self-pity and self-hatred can become strongholds in our life, that keep us from seeing our true value and worth. Others can become addicted to lustful thoughts that take something good that God has designed and turn into a mental drug to bring satisfaction and release. Bitterness, unforgiveness, and anger are also mental drugs, and many people go to bed at night feeling better that they have someone else to blame. (P) Negative thought patterns like these are like a broken record that play over and over in our minds, and the longer it plays, the more damage is done. (P) Thankfully, there’s a 3rd option. According to Paul, we need to fill our minds with good things—things that are true, honorable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, and praise worthy. This third option is a balanced diet that consists of things that inspire us and build us up, that bring peace, joy and hope, that take

the focus off us and this world and put it on God and His Kingdom. There's only one place we can find all of these at once, and that's Scripture. The Bible is like spiritual food and we need to "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest" what we find in this book. The great thing is, like any balanced diet, the more we fill our minds with good things, with what we find in this book, the stronger and more spiritually healthy we'll be. (P) Let me explain: Renewing our minds requires faith, and faith is acting on the Word of God, applying it in order to change the way we think about our life, work, relationships—everything. The Word allows us to know God and approach our lives in a way that pleases Him, bringing our will into agreement and alignment with His will. As we fill our mind with God's Word by reading, pondering, memorizing, praying, speaking out loud, and even singing it, we begin to think in a way that pleases God, and His ways become our ways. This new perspective changes everything! The Father desires that His children be free now and live victoriously over the evil caused by the enemy. He wants us to live His Word because it's the key to our deliverance and success. Renewing our mind through God's Word will revolutionize our life for the better, and there's no better time to get started than right now! (P) Where do you go at the end of a busy day when you need to let down? Do you go to mental junk food or mental drugs, or do you go to a balanced diet? What are you filling your mind with?

God has blessed us with a mind, and woven into our human fabric is the desire to learn and to understand. We analyze, conceptualize, theorize, discuss, and debate everything from science to the supernatural. We build schools, institutions, and academies, colleges, universities, and other places of learning to broaden our minds, gain more and more knowledge, and deepen our understanding of the world around us. Although this is a good thing—it's not our first priority. As Christian people, our first priority is to love God

with all of our mind. (P) How are you practically living this part of the Great Commandment out in your everyday life? Do you love God with all your mind? Which one of these 3 principles might you need to work on? (P) This week I encourage you to increase your love for God by following Paul's advice in Philippians 4. This week I encourage you to pick one of the these three principles and pray: "This week, Lord, I'm going to try to fear you more. I'm going to look for opportunities in my everyday life to honour you and the things of your kingdom. Or, "I'm going to fix my thoughts on things that are above, instead of getting distracted by the things of this world." Or, "Instead of filling my mind with mental junk food, I'm going to try to fill it with good things—things that build me up and bring me true peace and joy." (P) Whatever it is, pick one and spend the next 7 days actively trying to live out the Great Commandment to love God with your mind. (P) "...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." (P) Amen.