Have the mind of Christ

Dez was a bouncer/doorman in Scotland. He lived a life of violence, drugs, fighting, and partying. Then he took a massive overdose. He thought he was having a heart attack and cried out to live. The next day, he says, he never touched drugs again.

But the overdose wasn't the real conversion.

Afterwards, he kept encountering Christians. One was a woman called Fiona, who lived her Christian faith seriously. She gave him a Bible. He started reading it and said: "I started tearing through it trying to find something and I ended up finding Jesus. Suddenly, my whole life made sense."

He then went to church with Fiona, and he heard about Alpha. He said, "On Alpha, I met Jesus and it changed my life." He had a transformation of his mind:

1. About God: from doubting God's existence? → God cares about me.
2. He changed his mind about himself: from a violent, drug-fuelled person. → I am someone capable of love.
3. He changed his mind about others

He eventually studied theology, worked for Alpha Scotland, married Fiona and became a father.

Humans are made to know they are loved by God, so they can love themselves in a healthy way, and love others generously.

The bad news is that sin has entered the world.

Humans naturally doubt God's existence and love, struggle to leave themselves healthily, find it difficult to love others selflessly.

Jesus had a perfectly transformed mind.

Philippians 2 says Jesus "was in the form of God."

In other words, Jesus had the mind of God.

The good news is that as a disciple of Jesus, he can transform my, your, and our minds.

Philippians 2: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus."

You, I, and we can have the mind of Jesus Christ.

Change: Matthew says: "He changed his mind and went… The tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you."

The chief priests and elders knew the 613 commandments of Jewish law. The laws were intended to help Israel recognise the coming Messiah.

These religious leaders were closed-minded to John the Baptist's message about Jesus.

They believed they could fulfil the laws by their own power. They didn't need to trust in God's mercy and love.

The tax collectors and prostitutes had turned away from these laws - perhaps because they were unable to live them. Yet they were more open to Jesus.

Why?

They knew their need for mercy and forgiveness.

There are two types of church models:

1. "Behave-believe-belong." People have to behave the right way, believe the right things, in order to belong. People are shamed into faith. This is the model of the chief priests and elders.

2. "Belong-believe-behave." People belong because God accepts them, wherever they are in faith or life. God's unconditional acceptance changes what they believe about God, themselves and others. This changes how they behave: they become kinder and more loving. They are loved into faith and transformed from the inside. This is Jesus' model of church.

You are not loved because you can complete a long religious tick-list.

You are loved because you are God's creation. You are made for God's love.

Do you think you have to fulfil the law by your own strength before God accepts you?

This is not the mind of Christ.

If you feel outside the church:

You can go into the kingdom of God before some religious people!

Have the mind of Christ.

Jesus invites you into personal discipleship with him.

In him, you are accepted as you are.

In him, you are loved unconditionally as you are.

In him, you can be transformed to be more like him – and more like you.

This Mass is God's opportunity to renew his love.

This Eucharist is God saying, "I accept you, I love you, and you can be transformed. You can have the mind of Christ."

Imagine if the whole world had the mind of Christ?

Imagine a world without war, peace, understanding, dialogue, friendship, love.

The local church is God's plan A to build this world.

How can you play your part even more here?

Who is it in your family, work, school or among your friends who may not be a churchgoer but has an open mind about Jesus?

Pray for them. Invite them to come and see. They have a place here to explore Jesus.

Prayer

Lord, thank you that with Jesus, I can have the mind of Christ.

Change me from self-righteousness to dependence on God's mercy.

Help me to be more open and accepting of others.

So that those I meet this week can change their mind and know God's unconditional love for them in Jesus, amen!