



# Westminster Presbyterian Church

The Rev. Dr. Richard Baker  
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## My Soul's Been Anchored in the Lord Having the Mind of Christ

Scripture Lessons: 1 Corinthians 2:16

I want to talk about having the mind of Christ, about being anchored in the Lord; as well as about how baptism and church membership relate to them. But to talk about that, I need to talk first about the little noises that practitioners—good practitioners in any field—make in the backs of their throats.

A personal example: When I ruptured my quadriceps two years ago . . . Well, at first I didn't know I *had* ruptured my quadriceps. I mean, I knew *something* had happened—I was playing basketball; I stumbled; something in my leg went “BOING!”; I fell down; it hurt. But I googled my symptoms, looked at some websites, and decided: oh, it's just a pulled a muscle . . . No big deal, a little time, a few rehab exercises (I found those on line, too), and I'll be running again in no time. After a week, however, I still wasn't really . . . well, *walking*, at least not very well, and my colleagues suggested that I *might* want to see a doctor.

So there I sat, in the examination room, having had my MRI, wearing one of those little gowns that tie and then come untied in the back, and the doctor comes in. After the usual pleasantries, he clips the MRI on a little projector-screen, and begins to examine my leg. It was then that he began to make those little noises in the back of his throat.

“Hmm. Tell me what happened.”

So I did.

Hmmmmm.

“Can you dangle your leg off the table here?”

I lift my leg off the table with both hands and hoist it over the edge.

“HMMMMMMMM. OK: Now try to lift your foot.”

A small movement, almost no movement at all.

“Hmmm . . . hum . . . Hum”

He looks closely at the MRI on the screen. And then turns back to me and my leg, and gently touches a spot right above my knee. “Does this hurt?”

[Sharp intake of breath]: “Ouch!”

[Deep intake of breath, nodding of head]: Hmmmmmmmmmmmmm.

Then I noticed what looked to be two medical residents (I guessed they were *his* medical residents) walking by, peeking in at us.

“Come in here,” the doctor calls to them, “I want you to see this.” He points to the MRI. (Now, to me, the MRI looks like nothing so much as an extreme close-up of the wavy lines in Edvard Munch’s painting *The Scream*—for some reason that example came to mind—but to the doctor and his residents, those lines meant something, especially where they had little breaks in them.) So the residents begin to examine my leg, occasionally glancing up at the doctor or back over their shoulders at the MRI. And they start doing it too: “Hmmm” . . . . “Hmmmmmmm.”

It’s the same thing with auto mechanics: Click and Clack—the Car Talk guys on Public Radio—they ask a few questions, get the caller to make the noise the car is making, get the caller to make the noise again, and then, suddenly, from the back of Tom’s throat comes: [Deep intake of breath]: “Hmmmmm.” And then Ray jumps in: “What my brother means is that this is going to cost you.”

So where do these little noises come from? Well, from the back of the throat—I know, I know, I said that. But beyond that, I think they come from a deep familiarity with, a deep knowledge of, I would even say a wisdom about, the subject at hand, whether it’s the human knee, a car’s fuel pump, or whatever. The little noises come from the kind of knowledge that shapes a person, that makes a person who and what he or she is.

You can tell this because they usually come out spontaneously, unbidden; the person isn’t thinking about making them at all; no, the person is thinking about what they know—the knee, the car, or whatever. The noises come out as a kind of involuntary response to what the person is seeing or hearing—this knee, this car, this whatever—in light of that knowledge. But even if we can’t always understand those little noises right away (is that a good “hmmm,” or a bad “hmmm”?) they tell us this much: this person has a mind of the subject at hand.

“That which knows and that which is known are the same,” Aristotle said more than two millennia ago. To put it another way: There is a kind of union and identity between the mind of the knower and the thing known. That’s what knowing is: a kind of union and identity between the mind of the knower and the thing known.

My doctor had a mind of human anatomy, and in particular, the anatomy of the human knee. Tom and Ray—a mind of cars and how they work. To have a mind of something: it’s what Langston Hughes was getting at in the poem I quoted last week, “I’ve known rivers: my soul has grown deep like the rivers.”

To have a mind of something. Look, it isn’t all that mysterious, or rather, it’s one of those everyday mysteries that’s always all around us, that’s so much a part of who and what we

are as human beings, that we overlook it. (Sidenote: the best way to hide something is to put it in plain view; the hardest thing for us to know is ourselves.)

To have a mind of something: it's true in other fields, as well—in all fields, in fact. An engineer has a mind of certain material, physical, or chemical structures and their operations. An accountant? A mind of accounts, taxes, books, finances and financial health. A lawyer? A mind of the law. (What do they say to first-year law students? “We will teach you to think like a lawyer). What my doctor was teaching those residents—and please notice how few words he used, which would not have been the case had he simply been conveying facts or a prescribed method (those, by the way, you can get on line)—what my doctor was teaching those residents was to have a mind of the human knee and my knee.

And it's true not only for fields that require extensive, formal training, although it's easiest to see there. It's true in everything, for every kind of knowing: My great-aunt Louise had to leave school in the seventh grade to support her brothers and sisters, but she had deep knowledge of, great wisdom about, some of the most important things in a human life.

You'd sit there and tell her your problems. And she'd listen. And as she listened, she'd make these little noises in the back of her throat, Hmm . . . HmmHmm. HmmmHmmmHmmm. And then she'd gently touch a spot or two with her questions. [Sharp intake of breath]: “Ouch!.” [Deep intake of breath, nodding of head]: “Hmmm. And then, with time, she'd tell a story or recall a saying, both of which always had healing and reparative effects.

This union and identity between the knower and the known can go deep, even deeper than an MRI: it can be personal, it can be between persons, among people.

I remember when my father first began to fail and thus to fall down: they put him in the hospital for all kinds of tests, including an MRI. The MRI report was five pages long, single-spaced: It detailed everything from the curvature of his spine, to the bend of his long-ago broken arm, to where his most recent meal was in his digestive tract. I remember, as I read it, saying out loud to the report (it was an emotional moment), “You don't know my father at all, not the way I know him.”

“That which knows and that which is known are the same,” Aristotle said more than two millennia ago. There is a kind of union and identity between the mind of the knower and the thing known. It can go deep.

And when we have a mind of something, we also have the mind of God.

It's one of the oldest justifications for science that there is: we seek to know the order of the cosmos, of the natural world, so that the *macrocosm* out there will become the *microcosm* in here. That's having a mind of the natural world: the human mind comes to mirror, comes to have, something of the order, beauty, and magnificence of nature: my soul has grown deep like the rivers. The astronomer Johannes Kepler takes it a step farther, saying that, in doing

science he is “thinking the thoughts of God after God.” In other words, since the order out there in the cosmos comes from God, a human being, having a mind of that order, has, at least to some, small extent, the mind of God—is thinking the thoughts of God after God.

So too with music, when we have a mind of music, we have the mind of God: George Herbert, in his poem, *Church Music*, says, “Church Music/Sweetest of sweets/Rising and falling with your wings/I travel in your company/You know the way to heaven's door.

All of this is a gift from God: A God who is three in one, and one in three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, a perfect union and identity among the three, each one perfectly having the mind of the others. A triune God who also has a mind of us, who comes to us, as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. And because God so has a mind of us, we can have a mind of God, of one another, and of the world. That is *our* union and identity in the Spirit. It's one of those everyday mysteries that's always all around us, with us, that's so much a part of who and what we are as human beings, that we overlook it. Paul describes it this way:

*There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.*

Above all, and through all, and in all—an everyday mystery: having the mind of God. And having the mind of Christ.

You know the way to heaven's door: Anytime, anyone has a mind of something, knows something, anything, deeply and truly, and uses that knowledge for the good of others, for the healing and the repair of the world, whenever and however that may happen, right there and then, that person has the mind of Christ—and that includes my Aunt Louise, my orthopedic surgeon and, yes, Click and Clack (God has a sense of humor). Regardless of whether that person has been baptized, regardless of whether that person has ever darkened the door of a church, much less become a member, that person has the mind of Christ. It is in carrying out our various God-given callings that we are close to God, that we have the mind of Christ.

And yet baptism and church membership do matter—greatly: Because it is in baptism and church membership that we acknowledge that all of this is a gift from God, that this is who God is and this is who we are. And when we acknowledge this, we are anchored in the Lord. No longer tossed to and fro and blown about by every doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming, but speaking the truth in love, we grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ.

We have the mind of Christ. In baptism and church membership, we acknowledge that, and so we are anchored in the Lord. We know that we have the mind of Christ.

Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.