**8 14 16*"THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK"***

***“Brethren, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, Who, though He was in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant”***

 Beloved in our Lord, St. Paul’s statement in Philippians 2 tells as Christians how to find true freedom. To find true freedom, we must have a radically different mind than those who belong to the world. We must think in different categories, and our goals must be far different from those whose sole desire is simply to live out their lives comfortably on this earth. This is at once a disturbing, but at the same time a liberating and joyous opportunity. It is an opportunity for us to experience true completeness and freedom in our lives. This mind that will free us is the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will find this mind and this freedom not by accomplishing great deeds, but we will find it in how (and with how much love and humility) we accomplish those deeds.

 So now you ask, how will the mind of Christ grant us freedom? St. Paul brilliantly gives us the answer. Our Lord who was in the form God Himself (that is in His very essence, not simply in His image), thought it not “robbery” to be equal to God. When we rob (or grasp, seize) something that does not belong to us, we are always bound by fear that we will lose it; that we will be caught by its rightful owner and lose not only the thing that we stole but also our dignity and our freedom. Therefore, if we do not truly possess and know the dignity we have been given by God, we will try to seize or rob these things from other people. That is, we build our lives around proving how great we are, and subtly (or not so subtly), focus on demonstrating how much better than other people we are. We fear losing our status. Beloved, this fear and self-focus separates us from others and is a kind of existential prison. Hell is the inability to humble ourselves before other people.

 But if we possess something in our very nature and personhood, we will never fear losing it because it is a part of who we are. This is indeed freeing for it can never be taken away from us. We are not afraid to humble ourselves in front of anyone, for we know that the Humble One dwells in us and will turn our humiliation into power. We empty ourselves and become a servant to others. We try to make others look good-even at our own expense. We continue to do our best for others even if they criticize us. This is what our Master did for us. Being God, he humbled Himself for our sake, and yet was deemed crazy and even demon-possessed. He knew Himself- that he had all power in heaven and on earth; that with one word He could summon 12 legions of angels and rain fire on the earth. And yet He submitted to the humiliation of dying like a criminal, so that we might regain our dignity and become whole again. Beloved, this humble Christ lives in us! Let us die to our own pride and self-focus so that He may love and serve others through us. Let us never be afraid of humbling ourselves or losing our status for we know who we are and to Whom we belong. In this way, we become truly free….because we have His mind as our very own possession- the mind of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.