

We Preach Christ Crucified

Slide -

Our text today will be taken out of 1 Corinthians 1 & 2.

Listen to Paul where he states as we start with;

Slide - 1 Corinthians 1:18 “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

Paul is saying then and now that the preaching of the cross of Christ as the means of salvation and the only means of salvation is foolishness in the eyes of the wise people of the world.

The word foolishness is from the Greek word moria, from which we get moron, which means stupid and silly.

So, the cross looks absurd and illogical, thus stupid and silly to those who have elevated their own philosophies.

It is too simple to say that the death of **one** man on **one** hill on **one** piece of wood at **one** moment in history

It is far too much simplification to say that is the determining factor of the destiny for every person who ever lived.

Mankind would rather follow a philosophy that is far more complex and mystifying than that which would glorify the wisdom of mankind.

Key part there is the glorification of mankind and the wisdom.

But Paul in verse 19 where he says For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

Slide - He is quoting Isaiah 29:14 “Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work among this people, A marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent men shall be hidden.”

This passage here at the time it was written is referring to 2 Kings 19 in which Judah’s King Hezekiah prays to God regarding the pending war with the Assyrians who are on the door step of Jerusalem preparing to attack.

Isaiah goes to King Hezekiah and with these words assures him that it will be the Lord who will save Jerusalem.

You see, King Hezekiah made an alliance with Egypt and was counting on his alliance with Egypt to protect Judah.

King Hezekiah thought his own wisdom would protect the nation but then thinks otherwise when the Assyrian army is at his doorstep.

Slide - And the marvelous work the Lord does we read in 2 Kings 19:35-36 “And it came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the Lord went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand; and when people arose early in the morning, there were the corpses—all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went away, returned home, and remained at Nineveh.”

Back to our text, Paul goes on to say

Slide - 1 Corinthians 1:20-21 “Where is the wise man (philosopher)? Where is the scribe (scholar)? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.”

Two questions are asked.

Where are all those smart people who are going to solve all the problems?

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

Secular education is valuable but at it's best it does not solve all the problems of mankind.

Immorality, greed, hatred, cruelty, divorce, suicide, mental breakdowns and various other causes of sorrow and pain continue to this day.

With all the efforts of the smart people of this world we still have wars, crime and injustice.

Human wisdom has not solved or eradicated these problems.

Human wisdom and philosophy never wants to get at the real issue of the life – one's eternal soul.

The world does not want to know the true God.

We are surrounded by God, but the world remains ignorant of His eternal power but not by lack of reason

Every time we look at the complexity of nature, we see God's wisdom, but mankind chooses to live by its own wisdom.

When scientists studies botany, zoology or biology, they do not acknowledge God but come up with their own theories such as the theory of evolution.

What the world could not do, God did.

God provided the means of salvation from sin and the promise of eternal life.

Not because we are smart, for you see faith goes beyond intellect.

Do you know what greatest aspect of faith is? it puts everyone on the same level.

Whether they are doctors or store clerks, royalty or the commoner, free or a slave.

Reading on;

Slide - 1 Corinthians 1:22-23 “For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; **but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness**”

Many times, the Jews asked Jesus for a sign, do a trick, do something magical.

Jesus performed many miracles, but they would not believe Him. But God knew that would be their nature.

Slide - Listen to what John says in John 12:37-40 “But although He had done so many signs before them, they did not believe in Him, that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke: “Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?”

Slide - Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, Lest they should see with their eyes, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.”

The greatest sign, His resurrection, still to this day remains a stumbling block to the Jews and others.

And of course, the Greeks and those who love human philosophy will always propagate various theories and attract people to them and their theories.

While the cross of Christ is a stumbling block to our self-righteousness and an offense to our rationalism, this is where God has chosen to reveal His power and wisdom.

Then Paul goes on to tell us;

Slide - 1 Corinthians 1:24-26 “but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.”

To those who have accepted God’s call through the Gospel, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Man’s wisdom would never have conceived such a plan.

The exonerating of God’s justice, as well as providing a means of salvation would come through Christ’s death.

Paul says with irony, that this is the way the world regards God’s divine wisdom and power.

The paradox of the gospel is that the **opposite** kind of people from what the world esteems successful are most likely to receive it.

The world loves its wisdom and there is a substantial amount of self-glory and vanity with that knowledge.

Through worldly wisdom people who think they are self-sufficient and do not humble themselves before God.

These people being worldly wise, mighty, nobility feel self-sufficient and thus feel they have no need for God.

Slide - 1 Corinthians 1:27 – “But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty”

The message may seem simple, but it is the message which has carried the church through the last 20 centuries.

It is the foundation of our faith.

Again, in the words of the Apostle Paul:

Slide - 1 Corinthians 1:28-29 “and the base (insignificant) things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.”

God selected for His purpose irrelevant things of this world, things that are shunned and treated with contempt,

Even things that are nothing so that no one may be able to boast in the presence of God.

God does not need the help of human wisdom.

He granted salvation to humble people who stand as a living testimony to the world that human philosophy, wealth and power are irrelevant to God.

Since God has removed all human boasting, nobody can say “what God did is exactly what I would have devised.”

Slide - 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 “But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.”

God revealed His plan of salvation, through God Jesus Christ made us righteous in other words God making us acceptable to Himself,

Through God Jesus Christ made us sanctified, God making us holy and setting us apart for God, and

Through God Jesus Christ made us redemption, God providing our ransom from the penalty for sin.

Slide - Paul writes in 1 Timothy 3:16 “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.”

The world likes mysteries, well here is the mystery,

In the year 212 BC a very strange man wrote a very strange book and it was dedicated the Syracusan king Gelo II.

It was the first of it's kind known as a research-expository paper.

the name of the book if you lived back then, if you remember the name of the book was “The Sand Reckoner”

It is a work by Archimedes in which he set out to determine the number of grains of sand that fit into the Universe.

Can you imagine a work more bizarre than that?

Interestingly enough this same Archimedes created devices that changed the tools of war back then for a long time.

Even in principle, are still used today.

Archimedes besides being a great mathematician, was also a great engineer and inventor.

Slide - Archimedes created a screw that was like a water pump to help the large cruise ship he was commissioned by the king to build from retaining too much water.

Archimedes engineering ability helped him create his work with equilibrium which helped his work with gears and levers.

That same year, 213 BC, the Roman army and navy came to lay siege of the city of Syracuse

The Roman military general Marcellus and his troops were utterly astonished by the resistance they met there.

The general had to work feverishly to keep his troops from giving into utter discouragement

Because to their astonishment they encountered war machines that they had never seen before

That were far more sophisticated than any of the war equipment the Romans had invented up to that point.

One of those war machines was the catapult

But another one that was more astonishing was the Claw of Archimedes

Slide - When the Roman ships approached to cliffs of Syracuse, sailors looked up in the sky and they saw the huge crane operated hook – the Claw of Archimedes –

that was used to lift the enemy ships out of the sea before dropping them to their doom on the rocks below.

The city was fiercely defended for many months against all the measures the Romans could bring to bear.

So, the Romans were beset on both land and sea.

After two years and many men and ships, the Roman siege bogged down to a stalemate

The Romans unable to force their way into the city or keep their blockade tight enough to stop supplies reaching the defenders

The Syracusans were unable to force the Romans to withdraw.

But the successes of the Syracusans in repelling the Roman siege had made them overconfident.

In 212 BC A small party of Roman soldiers approached the city under the cover of night and managed to scale the walls to get into the outer city and with reinforcements soon took control.

Back to Archimedes, Archimedes was killed during the siege of Syracuse against the orders of the Roman general who saw the military value Archimedes would bring.

Slide - Before the siege of the city of Syracuse, Archimedes stated to the king of Syracuse "Give me a lever long enough and a place to stand on, and I will move the whole world."

Some 200 years after Archimedes made that statement a lever was found long enough to move the world.

It was a tree about 10 feet high, and the place it was placed was Calvary because the cross was the lever that turned the world upside down.

It was the cross that revealed the power of God Himself to right a top see terrvee world.

It was the message of that cross that changed the world forever.

The cross according to Paul's teaching here in 1 Corinthians has a visible and invisible significance.

Slide - In John 11 the High Priest Caiaphas looks at the cross and say to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish."

For Caiaphas it is an event of political expedience to get the Romans off their back.

Pilot also looks at it from the standpoint of expediency in reverse.

He thinks if I give Jesus over to the Jews and they kill Him then this will quite to tumultuous mob and keep them under control.

Slide - The Centurion in Matthew 27 says "Truly this was the Son of God!"

The people saw the execution of an imposter, while others the destruction of a dream.

But if you were standing there and you were observing the death of Jesus on the tree would you have seen in that event the Devine act of redemption?

Would you have witnessed in the death of this Jew the propitiation of a Holy God by a perfect sacrifice?

Would you have seen in that event the remission of the sin of all who put their faith in Him?

No that was invisible to any spectator of the cross.

That was the invisible significance of the cross.

How would anybody know that the cross was the supreme act of redemption?

It's meaning and it's significance was not outwardly visible to those who were there in the flesh.

To them it was foolishness. It was not known to the wisdom of this world.

It could not be known, save the special revelation of Almighty God

For all outward appearances it seems to display the weakness of Christ.

But Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says it is the power of God.

The power of God to turn the world upside down, the power of God to turn you and me upside down

And there was the mystery.

Slide - 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 “And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.

Slide - And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

The power of Paul’s preaching did not reside in his eloquence of speech or even superiority of speech or of wisdom.

You see in Paul’s day Greek and Roman orators were very impressive.

The art of persuasion by the use of lofty words or clever rhetoric was used for power and control, after all consider the intelligence of the regular citizens at that time.

Paul chose to forego philosophical or theological discussions regarding inconsequential things and opinions while there.

Paul’s demeanor was not with arrogance or with self-assurance, but with humility,

For he recognized the strength of his work depends on God’s wisdom, not his own.

The means of convicting mankind is not with smooth words that seem right according to mankind’s wisdom.

Faith is founded on the word of God, not on mankind’s reasoning.

Everything begins at the cross, goes through the cross and ends at the cross.

Our message is Christ and Him crucified.

We take it very seriously when the apostle Paul says in;

Slide - 2 Corinthians 5:19 - “that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them”.

Slide - Ephesians 1:7-10 “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth”

What Paul says here is profound.

This changes everything we thought we knew about God.

God is not up in heaven, arms crossed, waiting for us to appease and please Him.

He has stepped into our impossible situation.

He has made peace in the war between us and Him; a war we started and continued through rebellion and sin.

He did not win this war through the slaughter of all the ungodly,

but instead gave Himself up, ending the strife with the shedding of His own blood.

His death instead of ours.

His life given up as a ransom for many.

And He conquered sin, death, and the devil in the most unlikely and unexpected of ways.

Our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, in whom the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily as well see in

Colossians 2:9 – “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily,”

was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the fullness of time.

God sent forth His Son, born of virgin under the Law

Slide - Galatians 4:4-5 – “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

In humility He subjected Himself to the powers that ruled us, lived under them, and was even tempted as we are, but without ever succumbing to sin.

Then, at just the right time He died for the ungodly

Slide - Romans 5:6 - “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

Yes, God died on a cross.

And if that was the end of the story, we would have nothing to tell you and no reason to exist as a church.

But that is not the end of the story.

On the third day after Jesus was buried, He burst forth from the tomb, risen from the dead

Slide - Listen to 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 – “For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures”

You will not hear teaching that leaves you with the impression that God is stuck in heaven fretting over the world as he looks down in anxiety,

just hoping someone will do enough to get the blessings He wishes He could hand out.

Why? Because this is not the God of the Bible.

Our God, as revealed in Jesus Christ, is a powerful God.

He comes to earth, lives a perfect life, dies a bloody death, is buried, and rises again from the dead for our justification.

Our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, reminds us to take up our cross and follow Him

Slide - Matthew 16:24 – “Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

This means that until the day we die, our focus is on the cross of Jesus.

His cross is our focus. It is where forgiveness was bought, paid for, sealed, and flows from.

{Sometimes people say, “I like a cross without Christ.”

That's great. So, does the devil.

He wants you to forget about the victory that was won on the cross.

He wants the cross to be turned into a pop-culture icon that pop-stars living in unrepentant lifestyles can wear and brandish unashamedly.

Sometimes people say, “Jesus is not on the cross anymore, so why do you focus on a cross with Christ on it?”

They think because Jesus left the cross and rose from the dead, we no longer need to preach about His dying or display Him there on a crucifix.

But tell these same people they need to pull baby Jesus out of the manger in their nativity scene and you will have a riot on your hands.

This is the inconsistency in their logic.

They say Jesus is no longer on the cross so we should not keep him there, but Jesus is no longer in the manger, so why do they keep him there?

There is only one place where I have hardly ever seen Jesus portrayed: the tomb.

The tomb is always empty in pictures and paintings.

The tomb is always emphasized as empty in every sermon.

Why?

Because an empty tomb is an image of God's power over death.

But just as the empty tomb is an image of God's victory over sin, death, and the devil,

the occupied cross is also an image of God's power.

Slide - As Martin Luther said, "What man, being God, would humble himself to lie in the feedbox of a donkey or hang on a cross to die?"

And the point is, no man would.

Slide - The heavens frighten us; they are too calm; In all the universe we have no place. Our wounds are hurting us; where is the balm? Lord Jesus, by thy scars we know thy grace. The other gods were strong; but thou wast weak; They rode, but thou didst stumble to a throne; But to our wounds only God's wounds can speak, And not a god has wounds, but thou alone. – Edward Shillito

Slide -