

CTW: Micah 6:1-8

Reading: I Corinthians 1:17-31

AGD: Somewhat unintentionally I've been preaching in Corinthians lately. Before I saw that this was the lectionary text for this Sunday, it came to mind in a conversation with a friend.

He was being ridiculed by a co-worker. It's painful when people think you are foolish. It's especially painful when the person criticizing you has no concept that what you are doing is because of your faith.

- When we are doing a hard thing because of our faith....(personal struggle)
- But what do we expect?
- Maybe we can push on through and see opposition as a good sign...in the Kingdom of God the standards are all upside down

Paul has heard reports "from Cloe's people" of the divisions in the church at Corinth. The source of division is pride and selfishness. The solution for division is humility and service.

- So Paul attacks their pride and humbles them. He reminds them...

I heard a true story of a village in Afghanistan where American soldiers lined up the town's children to give them a small toy...

- We jockey for position.
- But the first will be last,

In the kingdom of the world....reason....information....power...time...wealth...self....

- We know how this world works. What it takes to get ahead
- We live within the vision of what we can see with our eyes
- But the Scripture and the Spirit tell us there is another Kingdom

God did not chose to reveal Himself through the wisdom/philosophy/reason of the world but instead chose to reveal Himself in humble human form. In doing so He shows that He is more about relationship than religion. He's more about communion that knowledge

And this Christ died on a cross revealing God's mind and heart

- God is not rational...God is beyond our mental reach.
- People don't like that. Some are offended that their intelligence is not considered to be exceedingly above all else (Where is that term exceedingly above? Ephesians 3:20 paraphrase "Now glory to God who is able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think")
- So, yes dear fellow students of theology, God is greater than our ability to comprehend.

**Not that we have to be illogical or irrational, it's just that we need to trust in God and God's word more than we trust in what we think or know.**

And not that we shouldn't be interested in knowing or learning. Because God is beyond comprehension some people use that as an excuse to not consider God's mysteries at all. Like a slow-minded boy fails to consider why his socks get wet inside his holey boots.

Paul reminds us that we were not chosen by God for our intelligence or positions. He goes on to state that God actually likes to choose the foolish and weak and despised. (How does that shape your self-esteem?)

- Remember, we live in an inverted Kingdom. The first will be last. The last first.

If you search the Scriptures and live according to the truths revealed there then you will look like a fool to worldly people. You may even look like a fool to people in the church since the church is also full of worldly people--People who have success, comfort and pleasure at the preeminent ambition of their lives.

I can think of three big clues that a person has his or her priorities in this world instead of the next.

- 1) Always striving to get an advantage in this world (everything they do is to make this life "better"). They think in terms of what is "Best"—best for themselves, rather than in terms of what is right or just
- 2) They are rarely kind to people who cannot pay them back. They may not be mean or aggressive but they don't love kindness and live it as a way of life
- 3) They talk more about what happened to them or what they are going to do, than they talk about what God wants and what God is doing.

Sometimes, I think Christians believe that faith is a tool for getting the most from this life rather than being a refining process to get fit for the next.

- Here is a question for us: just who's kingdom are we building?
- The Corinthians had a number of people building their own kingdoms.

To the people of Paul's day the death of Christ was a sign of weakness and failure. You can't glorify a loser. And it's the same thing today. People of the world don't understand what Christ really accomplished in His death and they can't understand why His disciples live the way we do.

Our King didn't set up shop to rule over a broken world. He took aim and destroyed the sin and death that enslaves us. He didn't come to get something from us that He was lacking. **He came to give us something that we desperately needed but had no power to obtain.**

- He gives forgiveness (for sin).
- He gives freedom (from sin).
- He gives power/grace to live differently (over sin).
- And He accomplished it all through His death on the cross

But people stumble over the cross.

1. People reject the Christ and His cross and stumble trying to deal with sin themselves.
2. People's pride is hurt to be told they can't save themselves.
3. People get offended because God is not impressed with their intelligence or feel compelled to submit to their expectations.

As subjects in this upside down Kingdom our priorities are not philosophy, knowledge or power but trust, humility and love. We look foolish to live this way, but it's not about us and what we can do. Instead it's about God and what He has done through the cross. The foolish cross of Christ over which wise people stumble.

BENEDICTION Ephesians 3:20-21

<sup>20</sup>Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.