

The Key to True Wisdom
March 27, 2016

I heard the pastor of another church tell this story recently. He used to jog in the mornings, even on Sunday mornings. He would get up early, just about sunup and run. About ten years ago he was up running one Sunday morning and was passing a gas station. He saw a man who looked homeless, dirty, and disheveled, sitting on the curb. God told this pastor to go up and invite the man to his church that day.

The pastor at first argued with God. "God, he looks dangerous. There is man over there pumping gas into a car. How about I invite him?" But God meant what He said and confirmed that he wanted the pastor to invite the man who looked homeless.

So this pastor did so. He went over and introduced himself as a pastor of such and such a church and told where they were meeting and invited the man to come to church. The man asked if they had food and as soon as he did so the pastor realized the man had been drinking,... a lot. He did not smell very good either. He assured the man that they had donuts and coffee and might find some other food for him too.

The man said he might come and the pastor went on running down the street. That morning he waited outside to greet the homeless guy, but he never showed up. The pastor always wondered why God had him invite the man to his church.

Well not long ago a man came up to the pastor at church and said you don't know me, but do you remember inviting a homeless guy to church one Sunday awhile back in a gas station? The pastor did remember. The guy said, I was the man pumping gas into my car. I heard you and I thought, I want to go to a church that would invite a homeless guy like that to their church. So I came to your church one Sunday, and kept coming and brought my wife and we are completely different people today because of Jesus.

I can say the same thing, as can many of you. We are completely different people today because of Jesus. If Jesus had not come and died for us, we would be completely different people from who we are today. We would be headed for hell.

God is still changing lives all over this planet every day. We are a part of that through our financial and prayer support for our missionaries.

We are living in the middle age of human history. We are living in the period between the two most important events in human history. The first of these two events was the coming of Jesus to earth. It started with his birth, extended to His death and resurrection, and culminated with His rising up from the earth to heaven. But the central aspect of it is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There are two major reactions to "the message of the cross." Paul, a Christian missionary, explains both of them in one of his letters.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV) 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.

Why do some consider it foolishness? Let me suggest several reasons. **Some regard "the message of the cross" as foolish because they do not want to know the truth of God.**

They know that if there is a God in the universe, then He is responsible for life. And if that is true, then they owe their life to this God. They owe honor and respect to this God. They owe thanks for their lives. And they owe submission to God's will. This would require a huge change in thinking about the facts of their lives and they do not want this change. So they push the truth of God away and try to pretend God is not real. They try to pretend their sin is not real. They hope that everything just works out good for them in the end. But they don't want to face the truth.

Maybe you are that kind of person. Are you the kind of person who, when you feel bad, avoid going to the doctor because you are afraid of what you might find out? So you ignore the fact that you don't feel right, hoping it will go away or resolve itself without you learning the truth.

Maybe you are the kind of person who avoids confrontation in relationships because you don't want to know the truth. You don't want to find out what that person really thinks about you. You don't want to find out that you are the cause of the problem. You don't want to find out that your relationship is much more shallow than you hope it to be. You run from the truth.

Are you that kind of person? Are you also running from the message of the cross? Please stop, for it is only in "the message of the cross" that you can find the solution to sin and healing your broken relationship with God.

Some do not want to face the truth of God. A second has to do with other beliefs. **Some regard "the message of the cross" as foolish because it conflicts with something else they believe.**

Most of the Jews of the first century did not accept "the message of the cross" because it presents a suffering Messiah. The Jews were expecting a Messiah, but one who would be a great leader. They were not expecting a crucified Messiah. Crucifixion was a humiliating, dishonorable death reserved for the worst of criminals. There was no honor in dying on a cross. In their minds Jesus could not possibly be the Messiah.

They were looking for a leader to arise and gather an army and eject the Romans out of their land, much as Israel did over and over during the period of the Judges. They were so sure of their interpretation of the messiah prophecies that they could not recognize the truth when it occurred. They focused only on the prophecies about Messiah being a warrior king and explained away or ignored the prophecies about Messiah suffering for the sins of the people. They were selective in what they in the preaching of God's prophets.

Many people make that same mistake today. They read some of what Jesus said and ignore the rest. They accept the teachings "love one another" and "judge not" and ignore Jesus' warnings of judgment and hell.

What are you leaving out in your belief set? What parts of the Bible do you focus on and what parts do you ignore?

A third thing that contributes to some rejecting "the message of the cross" has to do with their view of self. **Some regard "the message of the cross" as foolish because of their pride.**

They explain that this message is too easy to understand and accept. Everybody can understand it. Even children believe it."

I would counter that God intended it to be plain. God made it plain so everyone can be saved. For God loves each person He has created, and wants to save all of us from our sins. Just because it is easy to grasp does not make it less true or less important.

We all need water to drink. That is a very simple truth. Even a child can grasp it. It applies equally to all. Yet it is vital to life.

Yes, "the message of the cross" is easy to understand. But its simplicity does not make it any less true or less important. Don't let your pride in your own intelligence keep you from being saved.

God's plan of salvation is not something man can discern by his investigation, like undertaking a scientific study. The message of the cross has to be revealed by God. Learning of it does not rest on man's intellect or education. Learning of it rests on God's love. God so loved the world that He sent His one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

The other extreme view of "the message of the cross," is full acceptance. This view fully accepts "the message of the cross" as the truth of God.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV) 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.

"The message of the cross" does not sound like foolishness to me. It sounds like the power of God bringing salvation to all people. It is the power of God at work to save ME from the consequences of my sins.

God spoke to my heart convicting me of my sin. I KNOW I am a sinner. I KNOW that I need a savior. I believe Jesus is the Savior God has sent me and I have embraced Him with all my heart.

To those of us who are being saved the cross is the power of God. The cross shows the power of God's great love for us. The cross shows the power of God's creative wisdom. God needed a plan to be just and merciful at the same time.

God is fully just in that Jesus died for all sins. And

God is fully merciful in that whosoever wishes to may come to Jesus and be forgiven of sin.

There are no restrictions on who may come. It does not depend on your background, your ethnicity, the color of your skin, your education, your finances, or the amount of

your sin. Jesus died for ALL sins and whosoever wishes to may come and be cleansed of sin.

Yes, I celebrate "the message of the cross" for it is the power I needed in my life.

Jesus' coming was the first of the two most impactful events in human history. The second has not yet occurred. We are living between the two, celebrating the first, and looking forward to the second. The second most important event also involves Jesus. Paul had mentioned it in the beginning of this letter. He was writing of God's work in their little church when he said...

1 Corinthians 1:7 (NIV) Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.

Hasn't Jesus already been revealed? Isn't Jesus the subject of "the message of the cross?" Indeed He is. And yet, so many see "the message of the cross" as foolishness.

But the event Paul is writing of in verse 7 is the return of Jesus to planet earth some time in our future. On that day every person on earth will see Him and will know who He is. Every knee will bow before Him and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord of all the earth. On that day He WILL take up His throne. On that day He WILL begin to rule with justice. On that day any thought that "the message of the cross" is foolishness will be gone forever.

Perhaps you have a friend who is resistant to the message of the cross. What is it that they object to? Is it their pride? Is that standing in the way of them getting saved? I know some who are so proud. They don't think of themselves as sinners. They think of themselves as pretty good people, decent people, hardworking, tax paying, patriotic citizens, good husbands or wives, and law-abiding. They don't think they need a savior.

Is that the thinking of your friend or relative? Or maybe it is true of you? All of us are sinners in need of a Savior. There is no one here or anywhere on earth who is without sin. I hope today, you will accept fully "the message of the cross".

Today, won't you pray to receive Jesus?
Today, won't you turn from your sins and turn your life over to Him?

That is our message. That is the message of the cross.
To a dying man, it is life.
To the hopeless it is hope.
To the sinful it is the solution.

Won't you come to Jesus this morning. Pray your heart to Him.