

Last week we heard that we don't go to church for the awesome architecture, incredible music, or funny pastor. We go to Church to hear the Cross of Jesus Christ proclaimed. This may have led you to wonder: if I'm going to Church to hear about the message of Jesus Christ, this must be a powerful message indeed.

Well, today, my friends, I'm here to tell you that there is a life-changing message of wisdom and power, but... if you're not familiar with Christianity this message will be remarkably different from anything you might expect to hear.

The Apostle Paul was one of the first men who proclaimed this message. In a letter he wrote to the Church in Corinth, Paul warned the church that the Gospel Message of Jesus Christ wasn't going to receive rave reviews on the social media of the world. The message of the cross of Jesus Christ was unexpected, strange, and even offensive. It wasn't the type of message people were looking for. People of those days were looking for wisdom and power.

Let me explain.

- I. On the hand there were the Greeks. They were looking for wisdom that would change the world. Philosophers would present their ideas of how the world was ordered and structured, and use this knowledge to order and structure life. Much like a powerful Ted-talk today would be shared all over social media, so the wisdom presented by philosophers were tested, liked, and shared throughout the Greek cities, and the trade city was a hub where ideas were shared.
- II. Then on the other hand, there were those who were enamored by signs of power. The Jewish people were looking for a man, who would powerfully overthrow the Roman oppressors. They were looking for a king who inspired the people, rallied armies, and victoriously conquered.

Many today are still searching for these two things. Wisdom to order your life well; Power to conquer anything that stands in your way. Perhaps you would expect to find either wisdom or power when you go to church.

- I. In your search for wisdom: you've checked out every self-help book, watched every Ted-talk, read every inspiring social media message, but you still can't seem to find a good harmony in your life. So you decide, perhaps I should try going to church. Maybe that's where I'll find something worth trying and sharing.
- II. Or maybe you think you know how to order your life; instead, you need the power to carry it out. For you it seems like one person or situation always seems to side-swipe your best laid plans; and you're powerless to control the circumstances. You're in search of true power.

These are often two expectations when coming to church: Wisdom to live life right; Power to carry it out. Jesus Christ is the wisdom and power of God, but not as you might expect. The message of the Cross of Jesus Christ is a stark contrast to the prevailing desire for wisdom and power.

What is the message preached by Paul and the message you should expect to hear in church?

The central message of Jesus Christ is the message of a criminal on cross, who didn't deserve die, but nevertheless allowed him to be hung on the cross. Oh - he could've...:

- Eloquently presented his case in court. Wowed the judge and jury with his crowd pleasing closing arguments. He would've been acquitted and the ancient Greek philosophers would have hailed him as a titan of articulate logic and philosophy.
 - He could've because Jesus Christ was the very wisdom of God.
 - But he didn't. In fact, the words you might expect from the Wisdom of God weren't heard at his defense. Like a sheep before his shearers is dumb, he was silent and opened not his mouth.
- Oh – he could've... broken free from his captors, conquered his enemies, established his right to rule, and ruled with a scepter that tolerated no challenge to his rule.
 - He could've... because he commanded thousands of the heavenly hosts.
 - But he didn't... the power you might expect from the Son of Almighty God with thousands of angels at his command was never displayed.

No. Instead Jesus Christ humbled himself. Allowed himself to be mocked, whipped, spat upon, and led away to be executed. Arriving at Golgotha, Jesus Christ embraced the most painful **and shameful** execution that could be carried out in the Roman Era. Death on a Cross.

Such a message doesn't seem very attractive: kneeling at the Cross of Jesus Christ. To Paul's contemporaries, this message would've been embarrassing and offensive. No person would trust in a man on a cross. No self-respecting person would look to a man on a cross for salvation. To even discuss this cross was offensive and shameful.

Why would Jesus Christ not reveal this type of wisdom and power? Wouldn't such a display of wisdom or power fill the stadiums with cheering, chanting, adoring masses? If you had such wisdom and power, wouldn't you use it?

The answer is that Jesus Christ wasn't living life for himself. He was living and dying for you. That's why he denied himself, and embraced the life you deserved. He died on the cross, accepting the punishment that you deserve for your sin. He did this to endure the shame that you should've experienced as all your dirty secrets were published for everyone to see. He did this so that you could be forgiven by God for your sins. That is the message of the Cross of Christ.

In living his life in this way – Jesus Christ revealed the fullness of the wisdom and power of God. Through living his life as a sacrifice for others he lived a life of true wisdom: unselfish love. He revealed the power of God that died so as to free others from the grip of sin. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and also to you and I – calling us to believe in Jesus Christ the Wisdom of God. If you believe in Jesus Christ, humble yourself before the cross of Christ and accept his work, God then forgives your sin and frees you from the consequences that your sin deserved.

For many, such a message is hard to accept. "Kneel at the cross of a Criminal? No thanks! I'll find someone that looks a little more wise and powerful." The church in Corinth was strongly tempted to supplement this message with something they could feel good about when they shared it on social media. They wanted to supplement the message with the world's ideas of debate and logic; thinking this might make them look a little less foolish.

Just like the early church struggled with perceiving the wisdom and power in such a message, churches today might be tempted to supplement the message. We might be tempted to wow people with eloquence, entertain people with music, show to the world that yes, we truly are wise and powerful. But when this is done: we deny the work of God in the cross of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul, preacher of this message, wrote to the early Church in Corinth saying, "Don't be fooled into thinking that the message as it stands doesn't have power." The wisdom and power revealed in Jesus Christ is far more powerful than the wisdom of the world; Jesus Christ reveals the power of God's love. The good news teaches you and I that the only way to wise and powerful living is to acknowledge that we can't do it ourselves. Recognizing this, we give up on our own efforts of pursuing wisdom and power, and humble ourselves before the cross of Jesus Christ. Then we will find true wisdom and power at work: the very wisdom and power of God.