

1 Cor 3:10-23
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God's Wisdom

Today we're continuing our journey through the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians, as part of our parish-wide lectio continua. Last week we learned that the church in Corinth had become divisive, as people aligned themselves with their human leaders, instead of the One their leaders served. Paul cautioned against acting according to human wisdom, encouraging all to remember that as God's people, we are to focus on unity in Christ.

Paul shares additional wisdom examples in today's readings. But what does he mean in all this talk about buildings and temples?

I like to think of these images as Paul holding up a mirror to each of us, helping us to see that as Christ-followers, we too are called to do our best to build on Christ's foundation, to continue in our Savior's footsteps to unify all God's people. Paul wants us to understand that we are all God's temple, for the Spirit lives within each one of God's beloved children. And we are called to carry God's light and love into the world, not to judge or exclude or label, but to invite, to connect, and to compassionately care for one another.

"If you think that you are wise in this age, you should become fools so that you may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

What is the wisdom of our own age?

As uncomfortable as I am in saying it, culturally today, it's acceptable, even encouraged, to be divisive, unconcerned about unity, intent on maintaining our silos. We hear a lack of civility everywhere. And I'm not talking about being PC, politically correct — for telling the truth, standing up for the truth is important and appropriate. But that's not what's happening. Instead, we've normalized dehumanizing name calling, labeling and lying, to stir up fear and hatred. We've lost the ability to have serious conversations and important discourse about complex issues. And part of today's wisdom, part of our culture, is to routinely announce that we need to care for ourselves and our tribe first. We exclude the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized, immigrants and prisoners, when our culture's messaging seems to say the pain and suffering of those defined as other isn't really a priority.

But what is the message of the cross? Paul reminds us that true wisdom isn't found in power or wealth or eloquence or social standing — those things that captivated the Corinthian church — and if we're honest — captivate us as well in our own time.

True wisdom, the wisdom of God, fits within the context of Christ crucified. Just as a building must fit its foundation, supported by it and shaped to match it, we, the Church, God's holy people, must be built on Christ crucified, the church's one foundation.

Being Christ's own stretches us — stretches us to see all things and all people through the lens of whose we are, encouraging us to step away from the way of the world and instead live into God's truth — the truth of the cross.

Christ crucified shows us is that love prevails. Love wins. Not force, nor violence, nor oppression, nor our human ability to look away from those we see as other. The ways of the world will not win, for God is love and love wins, erasing all boundaries.

We, the shared community of Christ, are a place of God's presence. And we can, in our own and our communal lives, show the world what it means to live into carrying Christ's love into the world by seeking justice and peace for all God's creation, and respecting the dignity of every human being. For God's wisdom does lead us to new life — where enemies are treated in the same ways as friends and the marginalized are cared for with love — for Jesus died for all of us, not just those of our tribe.

Soon we'll be commissioning our Honduras Mission team, setting us apart for our work in support of the ministry of LAMB Institute. Our team leaves next Saturday and this year there are 14 of us: youth and adults, parishioners and friends of Holy Spirit. If you drop by the youth rooms downstairs, you'll see our stacks of suitcases and duffle bags that we'll be taking on our trip, stuffed with the donations so many of you have contributed towards this ministry.

Each of our team members also has a list of what personal items to bring. And at the top of the list, there's a reminder to bring a Servant's Heart — for we do need to be remember who we serve in this work.

We don't know exactly what we'll be doing when we go. Sure, we have a basic idea of our schedule and our routine, but what actually happens, what we'll see and learn and discover is always in the hands of the Spirit. One of the most challenging aspects of our travels is to put aside our pre-conceived notions, our ideas about the right way to do things, or some goal we may believe we need to complete, and instead to simply be open to discovering where the Spirit will lead us. To be present, taking the time to come to know our brothers and sisters in Christ, to build relationships, and walk with the body of Christ already at work in Honduras.

When we're open, we all have that opportunity to discover for ourselves that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. That our way isn't the only way. That different isn't bad, it's just different. That there's abundance life in unity, in breaking down barriers, and loving our neighbors as ourselves, for we are all God's temple, and the Spirit dwells within us.

Not all of us are sent out on a plane to foreign places, but all of us are sent outside these doors. Some of us are sent to help the homeless through Family Promise or by speaking out for those whose voices can't be heard. We are called in so many ways. But know that all of us are called, called to continue in the apostle's teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayer, to help strengthen us to seek and serve Christ in all persons by carrying Christ's light and love into the world — according to our own God-given gifts.

I'm going to ask you all to try something for next couple of weeks. Just as our Honduras team will be striving to open ourselves to examining the world differently, I'd ask that everyone here also strive to see and hear things in a new way by exploring your day-to-day lives through a different lens, with a fresh perspective. Every time you see, or hear, or interact with another person, first take a moment to consciously recognize that they too were created in God's image and carry God's Spirit within them. The clerk at the grocery store, a fellow harried parent in the checkout line. Everyone. And if you're up to an even bigger challenge, do the same thing when you're catching up on the news! Take a moment and pause, praying for God to open all our hearts to God's truth: that all are beloved children of God, carrying within them, God's Spirit — remembering that we, as Christ's own, are called to especially care for those who are minimized and ignored as "other."

I wonder, if we wouldn't interact differently if we truly looked at each other as full members within God's holy community. Would we be more willing to heal our divisions and find ways to seek common ground and purpose? It's so important for all of us, particularly during these divisive times, to lean into God's wisdom, instead of the wisdom of the world.

The unity of the God's people matters. Christ crucified teaches us to resist evil with goodness and to transform hatred with love, for the power of our Living God brings life out of even death.

Our hope is in Jesus, for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Love, not hate, wins.