

## 030324 English Sermon "Christ crucified on the Cross" 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Today's scripture passage, 1 Corinthians 1:18 is a well-known verse that many Christians have heard and even recite. It is also a Bible verse that often appears during the season of Lent. It speaks of God's power and wisdom revealed through the cross of Jesus.

Who wouldn't want to access God's power and wisdom? Paul chose to use the core concepts of his own culture: the spiritual power of the Jews and the wisdom of the Greeks. But religious Jews and intellectual Greeks cannot accept the message of the gospel that it can only be obtained through "Christ crucified." That idea is foolish and a stumbling block and a scandal.

First Corinthians 1:18-25 describes the foolishness of the gospel in the eyes of the world. Both Jews and Greeks rejected the idea that Christ was crucified. In particular, a God who would die on a Roman cross as a sacrifice for human sinfulness would appear to the world as a weak and foolish God.

The overall 'theme' of 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 is found in verse 18. The NRSV reads: "for the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." Notice the contrast: the message of the cross is considered "foolishness" or "the power of God." The contrast assumes two completely different ways of reading the world and living in it.

Paul identifies a group of people who not only accept but fully believe that Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, died on a Roman cross to pay the penalty for human sin with his own blood. Jews and Greeks who have been called by God believe this. By God's grace, their faith gives them access to the power and wisdom of God that everyone else is seeking.

These believers are no smarter, wiser, or better educated than those who reject the idea of a crucified Christ. They believed because they responded to God's gift of calling them in faith and opened their eyes to see what others could not and would not do. Faith itself is a gift from God.

The apostle Paul believed that the cross was such a scandal until he learned

that the scandal was also a gift. When he was still Saul, he believed the cross was proof that God did not love Jesus. But when he became Paul, when he became an apostle, he discovered that the cross was proof that God loves us. Paul says that the arms stretched out on the cross are of course the arms of the human Jesus, but they are also the arms of God who embraces us, holds us, and claims us as God's own.

In the Gospel of Mark, more than in any other Gospel, the scandal of the cross is absolutely clear. It is clear that Jesus not only suffers, but also suffers pain and humiliation to the point that he cries out to God, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34). What Mark tells us is that Jesus knows the human experience: when we are at our best and when we are at our worst, when we are most comforted and when we are most comfortless. What Mark is saying is that in Jesus Christ, God intervenes in every human experience. In Jesus Christ, God also knows what it is like to feel His absence.

As you probably already know, the cross was originally a form of execution for the most vicious criminals at the time. Until then, the cross was synonymous with curse and hate. However, after Jesus was crucified and died, depending on the person who looked at the cross, they had completely contradictory views when they knew why Jesus came down to this earth and had to bear the cross.

When Jesus was crucified, robbers on both sides were also crucified to death. This is the intention to put Jesus, the Son of God, in the ranks of robbers and sinners to die. However, the difference among these three crosses has an important meaning. The thief on the cross on the left mocked and was sarcastic to Jesus. He represents those who do not believe in the Lord until the end and are stiff hearted. As the Bible says today, the way of the cross is foolishness for those who are perishing.

However, for the robber on the right, he was also a sinner who had no choice but to die, but rather rebuked the robber on the left, and at the same time admitted that Jesus was innocent. With the belief that Jesus can forgive and save sinners like him, he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And Jesus said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." We often say that this person is the luckiest person in the world because he was saved at the very end of his life, but the truth is, that

person could be me, or it could be you.

Mark shows Jesus crying out for separation from God on the cross. Paul shows us Jesus and tells us that God reaches out to that very same cross to end this separation. In life and in death, in triumph and in suffering, in health and in sickness, claiming us for God's own. "For I am persuaded . . ." says Paul, and he's looking straight at the cross. "For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God."

These verses give us a piece of the picture, hopefully a step toward understanding, a step toward faith.

This is the story from Mitch Albom's "Eight Years of Companion." A man was looking for a job on the farm. He goes to the farm and gives a letter of recommendation to the owner. The letter says, "This man sleeps even on stormy days." The farm owner was in a hurry to find a helper, so he hired the man on the spot. But one night, suddenly a violent storm struck the town. Startled by the sound of the storm, the farm owner got up from his bed and ran out. He called the man, but the man was asleep deeply, and the owner rushed to the barn. Surprisingly, the animals were sleeping safely next to the ample trough. He ran out to the wheat field. The straw sheaves were tightly tied and covered in tarpaulins. This time he ran to the granary. The doors were barred, and the grains weren't getting a drop of rain. It was only then that the owner realized the meaning of the words "this man sleeps even on stormy days" used in the letter of recommendation.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, today is the third Sunday of Lent. Those who believe in Jesus and the way of the cross live by entrusting even their problems to the Lord, so they can sleep even in the event of a storm in life. You do what you need to do. One day at a time. And you leave the parts that you cannot help to the Heavenly Father. And He will make you lie down in green pastures and He will lead you beside the peaceful waters and restore your soul. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.