

Sunday Sermon: March 4, 2018

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1: 22-25

Sermon Theme: What are you looking for?

²² Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

Some people are never satisfied, they always want more. You offer to take them to lunch, but they don't like the restaurant. You offer a ride, but they don't like the way you drive. You offer to share something with them, but they want it all. It can be frustrating to deal with people who always want more.

What about religion? Do we know anyone who is not satisfied with Jesus and the Word of God and wants something more? We offer Jesus, but they are not satisfied with Jesus, they want something more: a bigger church, a different style of church, a different style of sound, some programs, or a different feel.

This can be very frustrating too. It's very hard to offer someone the Good News of Jesus, and not have them be satisfied with that because they are looking for more than Jesus in their religion.

The Apostle Paul dealt with people like this too. He dealt with people who were always looking for more than Word of God and the Gospel of Jesus. In the Word of God before us this morning, Paul leads us to ask a simple religious question. "What are we looking for? Are we looking for something stronger, something wiser? Or are we looking for the truth?"

The Apostle Paul dealt with many kinds of people. In this reading, he is really zeroing in on 2 groups of people and their beliefs. **Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles**

These two groups, the Jews and the Greeks, made up the majority of the people that Paul would encounter and teach. However, even though they lived in the same places, they were very different.

The Jews and Greeks differed in their customs, in their dress, in their religion. One thing that they agreed upon was that this message that the Apostle Paul was preaching was wrong. Even though they agreed it was wrong, their reasons for disagreeing were very different.

The Jews were a people who were always looking to the religious traditions of the Old Testament. However, to the Jews, the Old Testament lessons were not about God's love in promising them a Savior. For them they were about God's power and how he showed that power to his chosen people. Instead, of hearing that God's love was in his forgiveness, they looked at the power and wonders of God. They looked to the prophets and the way that God showed his power through them.

The Jews wanted signs of power to show that the Messiah had come. They expected that the Messiah would come and take the world by storm. This Messiah would be the embodiment of all the power that God had displayed in the Old Testament. He would come in power with signs and wonders and make everything in the world right again by putting his chosen people and his chosen nation on top.

Jesus didn't fit the picture that they had in their mind of the ultimate power and authority of the Old Testament God. Instead of a Messiah, Christ was a stumbling block to the Jews because he didn't look like a Messiah. Jesus didn't come and restore Israel to greatness, he didn't raise an army and overthrow the Romans, he didn't go to the temple to lead religiously and he didn't go to the government to lead politically. Instead, he spent time with the sinners and unbelievers. He used his power to heal diseases and illnesses. To them the miracles were not powerful enough, they wanted more because these were not the signs they were looking for.

We see an example of this in our Gospel for this morning. When Jesus came and rebuked the people for turning the temple away from worship, they demanded more than all the signs that he already done. They wanted another sign of power to prove that he had the authority to speak this way in the temple.

The Jews wanted something more than Jesus, something more than his teaching. They wanted a sign of power and because of their hard hearts, the simple Gospel of Jesus became a stumbling block to them. We have seen this and continue to see the same thinking today. There have always been people who want more than Jesus. There are those who look for special signs to show them that this church is correct. There are those who

look for miraculous signs and experiences in their lives to prove that Jesus is with them. There are those who are looking for proof from their emotions, they want to feel that Jesus is in a church.

There are many times that our sinful nature leads us to look for something more too. We find ourselves becoming bored with the simple Gospel and we want something that jazzes up God's Word for us. We want something more than Scripture. We want God to prove that he is with us and that this Word is the correct thing that we should be listening to. The devil wants us to look for something more than the message of Christ.

The Greeks also disagreed with Paul's message, but their reason was different than the Jews. The Gospel message simply didn't make sense to them.

The Greeks were all about wisdom. They spent a lot of time on learning, logic and reasoning. This was the culture that brought the deep thinkers and debaters like Plato, Socrates and Aristotle. If it could come to a logical conclusion that made sense, then it must be true and it was something to believe.

Every Greek had their favorite philosopher and their favorite philosophy. This also spilled into their religion. Everyone had their favorite deity that matched their favorite philosophy and outlook on life.

Before they would believe in a new god, it must be proven to them with sound logic that this was the god that would do something for them.

When Paul came preaching about Jesus, they wanted something more than the message of the Savior, they wanted a message that was wiser and made more sense to them

We see examples of this everyday as well. All we have to do is turn on the TV to see churches that are looking for a wiser, better message than Jesus. While they claim to be all about Jesus, their message does not reflect the true Gospel of salvation that Jesus preached. Although they claim to love people, they never preach the truth about sin and its consequences to lovingly bring people to repentance. Although they boast a message for today, they are not preaching the message of salvation through Jesus that people truly need today.

These churches are so popular, so big, that we start wondering if they have it right. Maybe they have found a wiser message than the Gospel, a message that works better. Soon, we find ourselves looking away from the true Gospel for a message that we can agree with, a message like we hear from those other churches that does not point out our sin and our need for a Savior. This message sounds good to us, it is something we understand, something we can get on board with, but it lacks the truth that God provides for eternity.

Paul tells us that there are many stumbling blocks that get in the way of faith. Things like signs, miracles, wonders, feelings or anything else that goes beyond Christ, are stumbling blocks to true faith. These will lead us to overlook our Savior for things that seem more important. They will lead us down the wrong road to unbelief.

Paul tells us there is a third group of people. They are not looking for a stronger message or a wiser message. These people are simply looking for the truth of their Savior.

Paul says that the Gospel is truth, but that truth is neither powerful in the human sense, nor it is wise and logical, nor does it sound good to our ears. Yet, what is foolish to some, is true wisdom to God. **the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.**

The devil has tried to convince people that there is a message stronger than the Gospel. People have tried for years to find a better message than the Gospel. But there is only one thing that changes hearts from unbelief to faith: the Holy Spirit working through the simple message of Christ Crucified for us. We can't ask for more, or look for more than the truth of Jesus.

This message is truly powerful. Because of Christ we are taken from certain death in hell to eternal life in heaven. Because of Christ, the power of the devil has been destroyed. Because of the Christ, we are forgiven of every single one of our sins, and because of Christ we are God's children and heirs of eternal. This simple message is the message through which the Holy Spirit works to bring us to faith and keep us in that faith which leads to heaven.

The message of Jesus doesn't make sense, it isn't wise and logical by the standard of the world. The world says that only those who are worthy are rewarded. A person who is willing to sacrifice for the unworthy and give them everything, goes against the selfishness that lives in our sinful nature.

Yet, this foolishness is the wisdom of God for your salvation and mine. God does not love us because we are good and deserve it. God's loves us despite the fact that we are sinners. It is this unbelievable love that led our Savior to sacrifice for us and to give us the unimaginable gifts that we would never earn or deserve on our own.

To those who are looking for the truth, the foolishness of the Gospel shown to us in Jesus is the only thing that they will ever need. Through this Gospel the Holy Spirit works the wisdom of faith and keeps us in that faith to life everlasting. We don't need to look for anything more, we have all that we need in Jesus. Amen.