

Sermon for February 16, 2020- 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

1 Corinthians 2:6–13 EHV

Theme: Real Wisdom. . .

- 1) . . .can not be found in the world.
- 2) . . .can only be revealed by God.

*<sup>6</sup> Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature, but it is not a wisdom of this world or of the rulers of this world, who are being reduced to nothing. <sup>7</sup> Instead we speak God's wisdom that has been hidden in mystery—before the ages, God foreordained that this wisdom would result in our glory. <sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this world knew it. (If they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.) <sup>9</sup> But as it is written: What no eye has seen and no ear has heard and no human mind has conceived—that is what God has prepared for those who love him. <sup>10</sup> But God revealed it to us through his Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup> Indeed, who among men knows a man's thoughts except the man's spirit within him? So also, no one else knows God's thoughts except God's Spirit. <sup>12</sup> What we received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we might know the blessings freely given to us by God. <sup>13</sup> We also speak about these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual truths with spiritual words.*

What do you think: are we Christians naïve – believing the things we do? Consider all the rich, powerful, intellectual and influential people in the world. How many of them are Christian? Not many, that's for sure.

For this reason, the devil, world and our own sinful flesh tempt us to feel foolish for believing the Gospel, saying things like: “Look at how far humanity has progressed. We are far more enlightened than our barbaric ancestors who used religion as a crutch. Why don't you give up your fairytale beliefs and put your faith in actual science?”

Is it true – is our faith in Jesus merely a crutch – keeping us from true wisdom and attaining our true potential? Let us listen to our Creator answer this question for us this morning, under the theme: **Real Wisdom** 1) cannot be found in the world. 2) It can only be revealed by God.

Part One: Real Wisdom cannot be found in the world.

The world may well consider the Gospel foolish and Christians gullible, but, as the apostle Paul points out, the truth is quite the contrary. He writes: *<sup>6</sup> Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature, but it is not a wisdom of this world or of the rulers of this world, who are being reduced to nothing.*

Christians are not naïve for believing the Gospel. Actually, they show great maturity by confessing their sins to God and trusting in His mercy to save them. In contrast, the world childishly does all it can to hide or excuse its sin from God – thereby running away from the salvation he offers.

Yes, Christians certainly do possess a wisdom far superior to that which the world professes. Even though the practice of worldly wisdom might result in earthly ease, fame and fortune, worldly wisdom cannot give our lives true purpose, peace, and hope. Why not? Because all teachers of worldly wisdom are human, subject to human weakness and sin. None of them know the mind of God. None of them are holy. None of their teachings offer any real hope at life's end.

This reminds me of a conversation I once had with an elderly gentleman, who spent most of his life following the worldly wisdom of working hard to attain physical things. He accomplished most of the materialistic goals he set for himself. Did they bring him joy? Maybe for a little while, but now, looking back on his life, he cried as he confessed how meaningless those pursuits actually were – keeping him from the things that truly mattered. Yes, how sad it is that it is only when nearing the end that people begin to realize their worldly pursuits of fame, fortune, power and experiences are actually meaningless. Such worldly pursuits bring little comfort to the dying.

But we Christians are different. How so? Instead of promoting the pursuit of earthly things, *we speak God's wisdom that has been hidden in mystery—before the ages, God foreordained that this wisdom would result in our glory.*

The divine wisdom God has graciously given us is the good news of Jesus. From before the creation of the world – foreseeing mankind's fall into sin – God chose his only begotten Son to be our Saviour. Right after Adam and Eve fell into sin, he promised to send a Messiah who would destroy the devil's work. But exactly who this Messiah would be remained a mystery until the time came for him to be born. Not only that, but it continues to remain a mystery to all those who refuse to humble themselves before God.

Yes, human arrogance and unbelief prevent all people from discovering God's saving wisdom on their own. For this reason: <sup>8</sup> *None of the rulers of this world knew it. (If they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.)*

Have you ever done something you thought was really smart, only to find out that it was utterly foolish? I think of an American woman I once met while living in Germany. She confidently filled up her rental car with gasoline – absolutely convinced that this was the right thing to do when her gas gauge showed empty. Too bad she didn't read the sticker on the gas cap of her car, which read: Diesel Only.

To an infinitely more horrific extent, the Jewish rulers of Jesus' day were so confident in their own wisdom that they failed to recognize Jesus for who he truly is: the promised Son of God. This led them to crucify their only LORD – something they would have never done had their arrogance not blinded them to the truth.

And, in a similar way, the people of this world continue this tradition of allowing the arrogance of human wisdom to prevent them from believing the truth. The world continues to think it can

discover real wisdom on its own, but it can't. Why not? Because, as the next verse indicates, humans lack the ability to search out God's superior wisdom on their own, let alone understand it.

*But as it is written: What no eye has seen and no ear has heard and no human mind has conceived—that is what God has prepared for those who love him.*

Do you think a pet goldfish could ever completely understand everything its owner knows and does throughout the day? Of course not! A goldfish is a fish, not a human. Not only does it lack the sensory organs, communication skills and brainpower necessary for understanding a human, it's also confined to its fishbowl and can in no way observe its owner throughout the day. Now if this is true regarding a goldfish, how much truer is it regarding our knowledge of God. He is infinitely more superior to us than we are to a goldfish. For this very reason, it's absolutely foolish to think that we can learn everything there is to know about God on our own. He needs to reveal himself to us. And thankfully, this is exactly what he does for the believer in the Gospel, as we read next:

Part Two: Real Wisdom can only be revealed by God.

<sup>10</sup> *But God revealed it to us through his Spirit.*

Now, let us understand this verse correctly. The LORD is not promising to speak to us directly through dreams, visions, and inner feelings. No, he simply states that the Spirit reveals his saving wisdom to us. And where do we find the Spirit? Exactly where God tells us to find him: in His Word and Sacraments.

Yes, God's Word and Sacraments are the only means by which God promises to speak to us through His Spirit. And this is an incredibly important point to remember. Why? Because there are many people in the world, claiming to have wisdom from God, but whose message is different than the Bible. Can you trust them?

Well, let me ask you this: suppose you signed a lease contract on a car, which stated that every payment is due on the first day of every month. Would you believe someone claiming to be a bank agent, who told you to ignore what's written and make the payments on a later day? I wouldn't. Everyone knows that written documents are what matter most in court. In a similar way, God has his wisdom written in the Bible. This is what he wants us to go by and not some dream or feeling of a supposed prophet. Yes, God's Spirit himself teaches us, but he doesn't teach us without means. Rather, our divine professor teaches us through the textbook that he himself has written. It would, therefore, be utterly foolish for us to put our confidence in anything other than his written Word.

But this leads to the next question, what exactly does the Holy Spirit teach us? The next verses of our text tell us:

*For the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup> Indeed, who among men knows a man's thoughts except the man's spirit within him? So also, no one else knows God's thoughts*

*except God's Spirit. <sup>12</sup> What we received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we might know the blessings freely given to us by God.*

The Holy Spirit is God. Only he can reveal to us who God is, and what he has done to save us. And this is exactly what He does for us in the Bible: he reveals the blessings God freely offers to us in Christ.

Yes, the Bible is God's wisdom – pointing us to Christ in everything. By means of his Law, the Holy Spirit shows us our sins and the just punishment of hell we deserve because of them. Why does he do this? To get us to realize how dire our situation is so that we stop everything and look to him alone for mercy and help. And this is what he offers us next in the Gospel – mercy and help.

Yes, by means of the Gospel, the Holy Spirit reveals to us how God loved the world to such a degree that he sent his only-begotten Son to save it. Whoever believes in Jesus shall not perish but receive eternal life. The Holy Spirit uses this message to get us to repent of all sin so that we might receive the salvation God prepared for us in Christ. By means of Holy Baptism, the Holy Spirit washes away all our sins, creates faith in our hearts, clothes us in Christ's righteousness and adopts us as his dearly loved children. Through Holy Communion, He gives us the very body and blood Jesus used to win our salvation on the cross – uniting us to himself and strengthening our faith.

And the blessings of forgiveness, life, and salvation that the Holy Spirit offers us through his Word and sacraments have a profound impact on us. No longer are our lives on this earth about the survival of the fittest or trying to get and accomplish what we can during the short time we are here. No, our lives become about Jesus – using our words and action to give testimony to his saving love, so that many more people might be saved and receive his gift of eternal life.

For this reason, we Christians don't just keep the blessings God has given us to ourselves. No: <sup>13</sup> *We also speak about these things, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual truths with spiritual words.*

That is to say, we witness the Gospel. How? Not by trying to coerce or manipulate people into God's kingdom through the use of human psychology or marketing efforts. Rather, by simply speaking the truth in love, we share God's wisdom by sharing the Gospel – pointing people to Jesus in everything.

Brothers and sisters in Christ: whenever the devil, world, and our sinful natures tempt us to wonder whether or not we're foolish for believing the Gospel, remember our sermon text for this morning and the truths it teaches. Real wisdom can't be found in the world. No, real wisdom can only be revealed to us by the Spirit of God, working through the means of grace. It is only through the Gospel that we get to know God. It is only by means of the Holy Spirit working through His Word that we received the forgiveness, life, and salvation we so desperately need. Help us, dear LORD, to ever treasure these truths. Amen.