

Third Sunday in Lent
I Corinthians 1:18-31 (Series B)
“A Herald in the Face of Confusion”
March 15, 2009

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from our Heavenly Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord, Savior, and King. Amen.

And the serpent said to Eve, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree of the garden?’” The serpent continued after Eve’s response to that, “You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

The devil provided the temptation and Eve gave in. She ate fruit. She gave some to Adam and he ate of it. Then, their eyes were opened and they saw that they were naked.

And, that’s when the confusion started friends. God gave the command. Adam and Eve disobeyed God by believing the devil’s lie that they would become wise beyond what God created them to be. So wise, they thought, that they would be like God. Is that possible?

God created Adam and Eve to be obedient. God delighted in His creation obeying His commands. This sounds strange to us sinners, but Adam and Eve were not created to question God’s will, His Word, or His commands, but they were created to trust His Word and to obey His commands even without understanding the why.

The event that day, that’s when the confusion started. It has continued since, and it will continue until the Last Day.

Our Epistle reading is from a letter that Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians in effort to help restore unity among those in the church. He’d heard that divisions were starting because of excessive loyalty to different spiritual leaders. Some said they followed Paul. Others followed Apollos.

Still others followed Peter. There were even some that said they followed Christ. And, even, perhaps, this last group said they followed Christ only to prove they were right and not for the right reason of simply following Christ and trying to restore unity. Confusion, the same confusion that started in the Garden of Eden when Eve questioned God's Word and ate the fruit.

Wisdom was important to the Greeks. It was their life's highest goal. It meant power and prestige. And, it was a real concern for Paul. Because, really, their quest for wisdom wasn't what they thought it was. It was only leading them into further confusion, division, and down the path to condemnation. And, putting all of Scripture together, apart from Christ, man continues on the path to no where trying to figure out what to do about two things- guilt and death. It's a path of confusion leading to deeper confusion, the same confusion started in the Garden of Eden when Eve questioned God's command.

Verse 22 and 23 of our Epistle read, "For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles."

Paul is making a point here concerning man's reliance upon his own wisdom. Even during Jesus' day the Jews were demanding of Jesus signs that would prove He was the Messiah. Well, Jesus did give signs. He healed the sick, raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, and fed thousands with only a few portions of food. What else could they demand of Him? The problem for the Jews, Jesus was not providing signs to prove He was the Messiah they thought He should have been- one that would set them free from Roman rule. They simply rejected any Messiah that did not fit in their understanding and desire of a Messiah. And, Paul recognized they were still

making the same demand during his day for any one who preached Christ crucified to provide signs proving that what they preached was the truth.

And, for the Greeks, Paul recognized they sought wisdom. And, so reliant upon their own wisdom, anything they could not figure out on their own was foolish.

The Jews and the Greeks both had their issues, but, really, they were one in the same. Both groups set out on the quest to answer life's biggest challenge- what to do about guilt and death. They were just out searching for the same solution in different ways.

Interesting to find that in the original language of this text that the verbs in verse 22 are present tense. This means that if these men were still alive today and never heard Christ crucified they'd still be searching for the truth concerning life's biggest challenges- guilt and death. The reason- man simply is not capable of coming up with the only solution to these two biggest challenges.

Guilt and death really are a problem for anyone. The conscience convicts and death is inevitable. And, if it's left up to our own wisdom we'd never figure out a full-proof plan or way to deal with it all. We're not capable. So naturally, we'd either try to hide the problem and pretend it's not there. Examples of how to do that are found all over the world. Such an effort last only so long before we start devising all kinds of ways to alleviate the guilt and cheat death. Still examples of that are found all over the world.

Friends, what is about to be said here is difficult for many to hear, but at the same time it is the best thing we can hear. God gets to decide what our biggest problem and challenge in life is. He's revealed that to us. Our problem is we are all guilty of rebellion against our Creator and deserving of death. And, by revealing that to us- we understand why Christ had to be

crucified. Because it was the only solution to our problem. A solution we would never come up with on our own.

All through history man has come up with explanations and solutions for the problem. The result has been wide-spread confusion. The same confusion started in the Garden of Eden, and that Paul recognized in Corinth, and that is still around us today.

The solution- Christ crucified, just as Paul, and all those in unity with him, preached. The preaching of Christ crucified was a herald. A herald, meaning, a truth, a relief that is right there, in the face of all the confusion. A truth that didn't have to be figured or reasoned out- but true and effective. And, Paul wanted those in Corinth to be assured that they could let go of all their wisdom and cling to this truth concerning Christ.

The truth of Christ crucified, what wisdom! It not only clears up what the real problem is, that suffering and death is the only way to pay for sin and guilt. But it provided the solution that Christ paid that price so we don't have to. Right there, in the face of all the confusion in the world- the one perfect solution!

Let's be realistic friends! If we were to all sit down and sort through our problems in life and decide what two things bother and concern us the most- I'm sure we would find that it is the guilt in our hearts and the death we all face. It's a real problem. And, we have just as Paul preached- a real solution, that Christ was crucified to solve the problem. There at the foot of the Cross we can simply dump all the confusion in life and leave it behind for it has all been sorted out and taken care of by our Lord.

What a terrific solution and answer friends to all the confusion in the world. We don't have to figure it out! That's already been done.

Our Lord Jesus said, “unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” And, what exactly is a child like. A child rests in the arms of the one who takes care of him. Never questioning and always relying upon the one who cares for him. That’s the way Jesus wants us to be with Him, to rest in His arms, to trust His ways, never questioning Him or His ways. He says, I have paid the price for you, I was crucified. I have forgiven you and you are mine. I am risen from the dead and you are alive with me for eternity.

And, it does not matter if we can figure out why the Lord has done all this for us. Just because we cannot figure it out does not mean it is untrue. God created Adam and Eve to trust Him without question. Even if it meant they didn’t understand the reason and the why. Our Lord, Jesus Christ has brought us back into that relationship with God.

Yes, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom. Without the Lord there is no wisdom but only foolishness. Without the Lord Christ crucified is only foolishness. Rest assured friends, you have been given the faith, the trust, in Christ who was crucified. From there God will continue to fill you with all the wisdom He knows you need to have. Amen.