

"We Preach Christ Crucified"

Grace mercy and Peace be to you from God Our Father and from Jesus Christ, His Son our Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

I Corinthians 1:22-23 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,

We just recently studied the book of 1st Corinthians in Sunday Morning Bible Study. In that study we learned that there were divides within the congregation. Some were rich, some were poor. Some were confident in their faith and trusted that they were saved by Grace, some fell back into old ways of following all the festivals and all the rituals of Judaism. Some ate meat sacrificed to false God's, some didn't. These divides overlapped at times and at times they didn't. Suffice to say they were divided and in crisis. The church seemed like it might come apart at the seams.

Right now, we watch from afar, the events in Minneapolis and other large urban centers. There are all kinds of divides. These divides have become inflamed by videos and spin. The divides fall along the old lines of 2nd amendment rights vs gun control.

Immigration amnesty against Immigration enforcement. Law and Order vs Compassionate response. Defrauding of the Government vs perceived racism and fear of immigrants. I am concerned that we as a country, as a church, even in families are all looking at the same pictures, videos and information and we are not seeing the same things and so we are in crisis too. Will we come apart at the seams? That remains to be seen but let's look at what St Paul did and perhaps we can learn something.

Paul's answer was to remember what unifies us. **Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him.** Paul points out that it is nothing in us, our position, our money, our abilities, anything we have, this is not the thing that unites us but rather the things we didn't. We didn't have forgiveness; we didn't have salvation and eternal life. We didn't have hope and peace because we didn't have Jesus. **30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.**

So, in the church at Corinth, Paul is telling them all it is the cross that for all purposes looks weak, it looks foolish, but the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, more powerful than human authority and more righteous than any human judge.

I once had a professor tell me a profound thing. If you draw circles around yourself and Jesus, Jesus will always end up outside your circle with the people that are downtrodden and defenseless. If the Jewish leaning folks said, "In here, in this circle because we follow the law and the festivals, in here it's just me and Jesus." Jesus would have been outside their circle. If the powerful and well educated in the faith had said, "In here, in this circle because we trust in grace alone and we don't worry at all about sin, in here it's just me and Jesus." Jesus would have been outside their circle as well. If the spiritually weak folk in Corinth had said, "In here, in this circle because we never eat meat

that might have been offered up to a false God, in here it's just me and Jesus." Jesus would have been outside their circle with people who were not afraid of meat sacrificed to false god's.

I believe a lot of things about what has happened thus far:

- I don't think either person who died needed to die.
- I don't think ICE agents who deal with difficult situations often deporting rank criminals deserve to be shot at and violently engaged.
- The laws we have, as Christian citizens should be obeyed. All of them. If you want to change them redress Congress and change them but until then, follow them.
- I believe that people have a right to protest in this country against things they think are wrong.
- I also believe that protesting should not be violent from either side.
- I don't believe that we are getting the full truth from either side. Who is really behind all of these things and why does it seem like they want us as a people to be divided?

The problem with all these statements is this, we are looking for hope, peace, perfection, justice, righteousness, we are looking for the things of God amongst broken people and broken systems. Did we forget where our hope comes from?

So, if we say, "Christ only dwells here with people who follow the laws perfectly," and we draw a circle around ourselves and the ICE Agents. Jesus would have been outside that circle. If we say, "Christ only dwells here with refugees and immigrants and ICE Agents and Trump are the worst part of society," and we draw a circle around ourselves and immigrants and protestors, Jesus would have been outside that circle.

It's ok to call sin, sin. It's ok to call mistakes and errors out because God's plan was not that one group is always right and the rest are always wrong. No, God's plan is that sinners often can't see the truth. I will send Jesus to forgive sin and then and forevermore we can call out sin and ask for forgiveness. We can admit our mistakes and ask for forgiveness. We can stop being so worried about what team we are on and all the perceived injustices and realize that every sin, every injustice is heaped upon our savior Jesus Christ. Indeed, he has paid for it all every sin of every protestor, every sin of every Immigration officer, every sin of every president and political leader past, present and future.

Say it with me, "**We Preach Christ Crucified.**" I don't mean this to be a dodge and say nothing. I want to weigh in on all details but for us to remember our most important identity first. Say it again, "**We Preach Christ Crucified.**"

In the face of corruption and greed we listen to what Jesus told us about money and what it does to people, "**We Preach Christ Crucified.**"

In the face of violence and dissent we remember how Jesus told us to forgive and to love our families but also be good citizens, "**We Preach Christ Crucified.**"

To anger and rage and ugly human emotions we show peace and joy and forgiveness, "**We Preach Christ Crucified.**"

Because we are sinners and because our hope is in Jesus forever and always, "**We Preach Christ Crucified.**"

We preach Christ Crucified. Amen.