

It's Not Foolish, It's Glorious!
1 Corinthians 1:18-21
Sermon – 01/29/2023

A wiser man than me once said,
“Communication means my inference matches your implication.”

In other words, what’s in my head is in your head when we communicate!

CJ and Simeon are the greatest example of this I have ever seen.

Back in the days, when we would regularly attend Eustis high Basketball games, we got to see CJ and Simeon in action as the starting guards on a team that was a game away from going to the state championship that year.

They lost a tight game to American Heritage, that could easily have gone their way had their superstar not had the game of his life and pulled out the squeaker win.

That team went unchallenged, from there on out, winning the state championship handily.

So, I know Simeon and CJ were co-captains of a State Championship quality team. What was amazing is how they communicated with each other on the court.

Whatever was in CJ’s head was clearly in Simeon’s head as well. They never said a word but very subtle glances, movement on the court, and almost imperceptible body language communicated where each other needed to be on any given play making it impossible for the defense to stop them or anticipate their coordinated movements.

It was a thing of beauty that made the price of a year long booster pass totally worth it.

It’s also a rarity in our culture today to have communication, that effective, that leads to that kind of success.

So, when you have it, cherish it. When you don’t, find a way to get it, because, you won’t regret it.

Today Paul, UTIOTHS, gives us a new kind of communication, that belongs only to what the world would consider; foolish, scandalous, weak, and of no account.

Now, this should not have surprised the Jews of Paul's Day, after all they have the precedent of the Old Testament.

Have you ever heard of Gideon? A warrior Judge in the book of Judges that was considered a pathetic leader on all accounts for the people of God?

Gideon was, by his own account, in the "...weakest clan in Manasseh...and the least," in his father's house.

And, as if to drive that point home, God would use this weak little man to conquer an overwhelmingly superior army of the Midianites with 10's of thousands of soldiers; with an underwhelming force of 300 Hebrews. Everyone that knows this story knows they won. But not because they used surprise tactics, not because they basically invented the Molotov cocktail. And not because they were like the Greek 300 hundred at Thermopylae.

No, it was because of one simple reality promised from God who said, "I will be with you!"

But if the Jews were not familiar with that history, everyone knew about little David that slew the giant Goliath with his own sword after taking him down with a sling shot and a rock.

And they would also know that David prophesied exactly how he would do it saying, "This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head."

And that's not it, Hebrew school and their local rabbi would expect them to know about the good kings that ruled with God as their source and guide and the kings that worshipped other gods would fail miserably.

They knew about the humble prophets like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea and Jonah who had little status in the world and were even forced into more difficult circumstances living in such a way we would consider unthinkable today as people of God, but doing it, because God was with them.

The Jews of Paul's Day would certainly know all of this which matches perfectly with how God lifts up the poor and downtrodden to humble those who would make themselves higher than God.

It was their very identity as the people of God. They were the small little nation with enemies all around, that was always preserved and protected by God from dying out.

To this day we still have hope that no matter what happens to the people of God a remnant will be preserved to keep the Gospel alive in this world.

So, when Paul tells them this, it should not have fallen on the deaf ears that it did. What had been, was still not enough for them, they still needed a sign.

As far as God was concerned, the only sign they needed, hung on that cross proving His love for them with His own son's life in place of theirs and ours to this day!

The Greeks aren't much better. Just look at how smart they are with amazing philosophers like Plato, Socrates and Aristotle.

Their philosophical thinking has formed the very basis of western thought and culture to this day.

When Marcy and I taught the boys in homeschool in Jacksonville we still used Socratic Discussion to help them learn from the Great Books Curriculum.

But in Paul's day he encountered an entire think tank on the Areopagus, or Mars Hill as the Romans referred to it, that knew nothing of Christ Jesus.

Magi from the east knew, but all their study of Persian Culture never revealed this to the Greeks in Paul's day, only Paul told them what they needed to know about the absolute truth of the world found only in Christ who was...with...Paul.

It's hard to get the world to understand this. And frankly speaking, according to Paul, we shouldn't even try,. After all, being wise does not help you know the one true God.

But telling them who Jesus is, does. Letting them know who the true author and perfecter of our faith is, does.

Bringing the weak in their faith into a closer relationship with Jesus, does.

Oh we can certainly attend all the evangelism conferences that will give us the demographic info and the techniques to making our community more inviting to the demographic that is least involved in the church, but again, that alone does nothing without the work of the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the truth of God's Word.

Just this year in religion I realized that I was not helping the students with bad grades but simply letting them suffer the consequences of their poor grade with the encouragement to try harder next time.

I realized, with some counsel by people much smarter than me, that we were not applying the Gospel to the classroom. So instead of telling them to try harder, I gave them paths to redemption through extra credit, rewarding them with free time when they worked well as a class, and the change this year for teaching has been nothing less than breathtaking.

More Baptisms than I have ever had in years past, more kids that are not members of the church being confirmed in the faith. And for me, I love this class as much if not more than any class I have taught in the last 14 years, because; their response to the Gospel is inquisitive, focused, and joyful!

All because I realized we can be with them as students just like God is with us. It only took me 22 years in the ministry to figure this out, but that's exactly why we approach life with a learner's heart no matter how much we think we know.

Truly the weakness of God is stronger than the most powerful of men.

Now, if you consider this truth from Paul today for just a moment you realize this is a troubling statement, and you might even ask yourself, "Is God in some certain way, actually weak?"

Isaiah 55:8-9 might help clarify this which says, "...my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Too often, we want to be wise, powerful, and well born in the church; like the world defines it.

Oh, this can manifest in many ways. Our worship can reflect the entertainment world, our fellowship can reflect a social club atmosphere rather than devotion to God's Word, and our preaching can become motivational, political, and social justice oriented, rather than proclaim the Gospel through the inspired and inerrant Word of God.

And that unscriptural orientation misses what God is doing in the world and always has done. God takes what the world despises as weak, unwise, and low born, and He reckons it as the very embodiment of His Glory.

We need look no further than the Cross which was nothing but an instrument of pain and suffering to execute the most awful death possible on those that would not submit to authority and law of the Roman Empire.

So God took that Cross, sacrificed His son on it, to make satisfaction for the sins we committed against Him, and now we wear it as a reminder that He freed us from the Sin of the Devil, the world and ourselves with it!

What folly, how low born, how foolish to the powerful overlords of this world.

But to us, who know our flaws, know our sins, and know we cannot save ourselves from this corrupt and sinful generation, it is the one thing we can boast about in the Lord.

It is the very means by which God redeemed the world. It is indeed the truth the life and way back to God from whence we ran away from because of our sin.

It's not foolish, it's Glorious!

AMEN

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