

Sermon Title: We Preach Christ Crucified
Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
Calendar Date: February 2, 2014
Liturgical Date: 4th Sunday after Epiphany

What do you think of when you hear of a good preacher or a good sermon? Many people think of a preacher who can speak with a lot of passion and emotion, bringing in real life examples and explaining how to be practical, a good father, mother, child, student, church goer. Well with the world we live in, we have technology at our finger tips and we can listen to or watch sermons after sermons. We have the t.v. that brings us a full slate of preachers on a Sunday morning. We have the internet where we can go to our favorite YouTube channel and watch sermon after sermon of a preacher. We will soon have the access we hope of either listening to or both listening to and watching on our church's website. So there are many ways to watch or listen to sermons today. Some are great sermons, some are not so great sermons. What we want to look at today, is what should a sermon give that is of the utmost importance? What does the Epistle lesson speak of today?

The Epistle Lesson today speaks of preaching a sermon to a specific congregation, the Corinthian congregation. Last week in the Epistle Lesson you heard that there were divisions among the congregation at Corinth. Some claimed since they were baptized by different apostles and prophets that they were now followers of them. Paul wrote to the people and said this,

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

The last verse leads us into today's Epistle Lesson. The Church is to be about the business of preaching the cross of Jesus Christ. We are about the business of baptizing for the forgiveness of sins, then also preaching the gospel of the cross of Jesus Christ, **lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.**

So we continue in the text for today, Paul speaks of the wisdom of God is foolishness to the world. The world's wisdom is foolishness to God. What is at the heart of this reversal? The cross of Jesus Christ is at the heart of the reversal. See God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the world's wisdom, the cross. God chose what was small and insignificant in the world to be the greatest treasure for Christians, the cross. God has a great habit of changing things from the way they should be to the way they are for His purposes and His plans.

How easy is it for all of you to overlook the cross? It is very easy. What is easier to talk about when it comes to spiritual matters? Isn't it easy to speak of God in broad terms, like, "Well we sure could use the moisture, I hope the good Lord sends some snow and rain this late winter and spring." Or isn't it easy for us to speak of the blessings in life, like we are sure are thankful for this blessing of _____. It's start to get a little uncomfortable when someone starts to speak of Jesus' death and resurrection. You don't hear much talk of Jesus cross and death at coffee talk. You can always hear generalities and vague God talk, but it isn't popular to speak of the cross and salvation.

So also it is easy for preachers to focus on the positive or speak of God in generic, vague terms, not truly explain the cross and it's significance. Because then the preacher has to speak of sin, and damnation, and hell. Those aren't popular subjects today to speak of in polite preaching, but that doesn't stop St. Paul. What does St. Paul speak of in this Epistle Lesson?

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God

chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

So what do I preach here at Zion? I preach Christ crucified. I preach the power of the cross. I don't preach myself, but Jesus Christ and Him crucified for the forgiveness of sins. Jesus Christ died on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins. Jesus Christ died on the cross to make you complete and one with God the Father. Jesus Christ died on the cross so that you could live this life in forgiveness and grace and peace. Your debt has been paid in full, you can live differently in this world. The cross of Jesus Christ makes all the difference in the world. Cling to this promise. Live in this promise.

I leave you with two paintings one is a painting of John the Baptizer, pointing to Jesus from the Word of God. The next painting I leave you with is a painting of Martin Luther preaching Jesus Christ to his hearers in Wittenberg.