**Where is the wise person?**

**1 Corinthians 1:18-23 NIV**

***“****For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.****19****For it is written:*

*“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
    the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”*

***20****Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?****21****For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.****22****Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,****23****but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,”*

Not everything in the world is good. Not everything in the world is happy. Not everything in the world is beautiful. In fact, real evil does exist in the world. You can pick up any newspaper and in the international section you’ll find terrorism, and war. You can go to the National section and you’ll find political payoffs, elected officials who failed to pay their taxes, elected officials selling off stocks, and the list goes on.

But where is the shame? The Repentance? Well, most times it’s not there. It’s easy to understand why. Most times we are ashamed, it is in the shame we tend to try to hide, from God and others. Admitting we have messed up, means allowing ourselves to vulnerable. And who wants to do that when society /the world is showing us it is okay to lie, cheat, hurt others without much consequence. But we must bear in mind what scripture says about us Christians: we are not of this world, we are set apart, a peculiar people. So be wise!

The Apostle Paul was very clear about this human condition. “*For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out”* (Romans 7:18 NIV)

If this is the condition of our world, why doesn’t God just destroy it.? Why is he letting it go on, the way people hurt each other? He sees it all. He grieves over it.

He sees people choosing to do evil against each other. Why doesn’t he destroy as He did in the days of Noah?

Because even though the world we live in is broken, God is still in control. God is allowing it to continue a little while longer for one major reason…. He wants to give us a choice, a choice to between life in Christ or death in the world. You know good or evil.

God gives people a choice. He wants you to love him because you chose to love him, not because he forced you too. God gives us self-respect, to choose good. Free will is critical…for without free will, we would not be able to love God.

God gives us the opportunity to express our love for him in response to the love he demonstrated for us at the cross. This is exactly what Paul means in Romans 5. “*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly.****7****Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die.****8****But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”* (vs. 6-8 NIV)

Can a 2000-year-old Roman cross which once held the corpse of a carpenter’s son remove the sin, guilt and evil that clings to your heart and soul? Yes, if you accept him. Can a borrowed and empty tomb be God’s method of providing you a steppingstone into eternity? Yes, if you believe in him.

***“****For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him,****20****and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. “****Once*** *you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because ofyour evil behavior.****22****But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—****23****if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.”* (Colossians 1:19-23 NIV)

To the world, God’s decision to accept the blood of Jesus shed on the cross as atonement, as a cleansing agent for your sin and my sin….is foolishness.

Yes, some people consider God’s plan of salvation, foolish. We know that people do foolish things. Years ago, someone I know ran into the back of a police car because he said they were driving too slowly. You can guess what happened to them.

I heard a story of “a man wanting to rob a downtown Bank of America, walked in and wrote his note: “This is a stickup. Put all your money in this bag.” While waiting in line to give his note to the teller, he began to worry. Had someone seen him write a note? If so, they might call the police before he could finish the robbery. He left the Bank of America and crossed the street to the Wells Fargo bank. The clerk at Wells Fargo, having read the note, figured this fellow was not the brightest bulb in the string. She told him she couldn’t accept his stick up note because it was written on a Bank of America deposit slip. She said he would either have to fill out one from this bank or go back to Bank of America. The robber said, “OK”, and left. The police arrested the man as he was waiting in line at the Bank of America.”

This story may sound outrageous, but it is true. None of us are immune from doing something incorrect or bad. Satan loves to set up faltering acts. Evil does not want salvation to reach you, reclaim you, recycle and inspire you. If the church has been preaching Christ crucified and risen, she has watched disbelievers and doubters walk away from the good news. As they walk away, some of them call over their shoulder…. “I’ve heard it all.” “When I was young religion was stuffed down my throat.” Or others say: “I’ve seen Christians. When I visited a church, they ignored me. When I heard the sermon, it bored me.” Have you ever heard those words from someone? It can be someone we know a relative, friend, coworker, no one is immune from those thought.

When Paul was preaching in Athens (Acts 17:16-33) “*he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. He went into the marketplace and reasoned with those who were there. He engaged in conversation with a group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers… so Paul told them about the God who created the heavens and earth, who did not live in temples built by human hands. In the past God overlooked such false worship, but now he commands all people to repent. For there will come a judgment day.*

*He talked about Jesus and how God raised him from the dead. Their response? “When they heard about the resurrection some of them sneered.” Jesus, His death on the cross and his resurrection was foolishness, a stumbling block.”* (NIV) They did not seek wisdom.

I don’t know what stumbling blocks Satan has placed before you. Maybe things have not turned out as you had hoped. The future which once seemed bright looks futile. Your happiness has been scared by stress and sorrow with this Covid-19. *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”(vs.18)*

The world doesn’t want that news told about Jesus: But tell it anyway!

*“This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.****10****This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.” (1 John 4:9-10 NIV)* Jesus had one purpose. He lived a perfect life and then offered himself on the cross to take God’s wrath against sin and evil upon himself so that all who believe in him might not perish but have eternal life.

“One last story: years, ago, an executive from a soap company and a famous pastor were walking down the street together. They were to attend a meeting where they were going to be honored by their city for their contributions. With a snide sort of smirk, the soap manufacturer off handedly said, “Reverend, you know when you get right down to it, the good news the church has been preaching for a few thousand years hasn’t done that much good, has it? Take a look. Read the paper. Observe. There is still a whole lot of wickedness in the world, and a whole lot of wicked people doing wickedness, too!”

The pastor was quiet for a while. Not because he had nothing to say, but because he wanted to say his piece in the right way. They went about a half a block down the street, passing a little child who was making mud pies in the gutter. The boy’s hands were dirty. His face was dirty. His clothes were dirty. Realizing the opportunity, the pastor said, “You know, I see that soap hasn’t done much good in the world. That boy shows me there is a whole lot of dirt and a whole lot of dirty people playing in it.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

The soap executive rose up in defense and instantly replied: “Oh, reverend, you know, soap is only useful when it is used.” And the pastor said, “Exactly, so it is with the good news of Jesus crucified and risen.”

We preach Christ crucified. The old wooden cross has changed the world. Once a hated and despised form of execution, a torturous form of death, it now is a symbol of hope. Because of that cross, and the man, Jesus who died on it… God has offered to erase, eradicate all our evil thoughts, our bad behavior, the commandments we have broken if we simply “cling to the cross of Jesus” and trust in his resurrection from the grave; and seek wisdom from the one who cannot lie or make a mistake. Amen and God bless you!

From Reverend Tanya Spencer

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1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)