

Title: God's "Foolish" Wisdom – pt.1

Text: 1 Corinthians 2.6-10a

Theme:

Series: 1 Corinthians #

Prop Stmt

We pulled up to the gated entrance of the subdivision and scrolled through the names on the security pad until we located our hosts. After the right buttons were pushed, the gates opened and in we drove to another modern expression of suburbia. Inside closed garages, SUV's and other expressions of safety were locked away. Manicured lawns were being maintained by various lawn services, giving the cookie cutter homes another expression of sameness although many of the buyers were pursuing their individual dreams. Sitting next to the pool in the yard of our hosts, I looked out at the many gated backyards and walled in porches that surrounded a little lake as my host told me that he does not really know any of his neighbors since everyone seems to be in their own world and are not really interested in getting to know others. But gates, walls and fences are not just on the outside of our houses. Inside, children live in their private world, where as one listens to his walkman, another is in the corner playing her video game, while the other chats on line under a phony personality to 15 cyber friends whom she has never met. Grandma, who watches the kids 5 afternoons a week, is watching the Home Shopping Network, and the dad walks in to find a message on the answering machine from his wife who says that everyone is on their own for dinner since she has to entertain some clients who are in from out of town.

Welcome to life, or the imitation thereof. America, the land of the free has become the land of the independent, where I can pursue my own life, do my own thing, and be whatever I want. But what is it that people want? They want isolation and the freedom to escape. In this country, adult males now spend an incredible amount of money on video games. Video games! Children do not know how to talk with their parents, because their parents do not talk with them but yell at them. Children do not know how to carry on conversations with adults. Adults do not know how to talk to each other. Moms and Dads hardly know how to be civil with each other. We are a nation that is more comfortable text messaging each other over our phones than with face to face conversation. We do not know how to relate to people. In our pursuit of our gated lives, we have cut ourselves off from community – not just the community out there, but the community of a family and the best community of all – the community of real church. The rich life has left us poor. The smiles of the actors in the staged commercials promising happiness belie the empty souls that are always within the lives of the self-absorbed. If it works for you, do it. If it makes you feel good, do it. And in our mad pursuit of that, the rush of activity without genuine relationship has left our hearts like the dry and dusty bales of hay that have been sitting in sun. Life is a mile wide and less than an inch deep.

All of this is both exciting and challenging. It is challenging because some of you are pursuing that life and you have not seen through the façade yet. Sunday after Sunday I pray that the thirst that God has put in your soul will no longer stop at the broken

drinking fountains of the world, but will come and stand under the waterfall of Jesus Christ. Living, surrounded by empty lives is exciting because so many people are so empty. They have given their kids everything but they do not know them. They do not know their own spouse, and are wondering if they really know themselves. You can reach some of these people with the greatest message in the world. But, you have to get out of yourself and be relational yourself. And of course, if we are going to be relational with a world that is empty, pale and poor, then we had better learn how to be relational within the church. In other words, being church to the world demands that we be church to each other. Christianity is in the exporting business, not the importing business. We have to take this living faith to our world. But if we are not living this faith, then we have nothing to export. If we are not living this faith, it is because we have imported the thinking of our world. One of the true evidences of faith is seen in how we function in relationships and that is not easy. Relationships are demanding. Relationships in the church and home can be difficult. In fact, they can be devastatingly difficult.

While the church is uniquely positioned to offer authentic relationship to the world, the church and for some of you, your own family has to get its own act together. The church in Corinth was a mess. They were a dis-unified, self-centered, self-absorbed, arrogant, self-promoting group of spiritual pygmies. And all along they thought that they were doing great! This letter to the Corinthians was written in order to confront and straighten out this mess. Notice 1.10! How do you address this problem of broken relationships? How do you attempt to fix your home when there is problem of unity? What do you do when there is disunity in the church? You go back to the message of the cross. When we deal with problems in our lives and in our church, we have to go back to the cross. That is what we have been studying in 1.18-2.5. The message of the cross is the wisdom of God. But the wisdom of God seems like foolishness to the world. But even though it appears to be foolish, it really is not foolishness, in fact, it is profoundly amazing, which is why God's wisdom and God's ways are what we rely upon and run to when we are trying to solve problems.

Part of the reason why the church in Corinth got into so much trouble is because they were relying upon the wisdom of the world instead of relying upon the wisdom of God. As followers of Christ, we cannot address the heart of our problems with the wisdom of the world, we have to rely upon the wisdom of God. For the next 3 Sundays, I am going to preaching through the rest of 1 Corinthians 2. From 2.6-16 we are going to be learning about God's wisdom, so that we are better prepared to deal with the heart of relational problems. The wisdom of God is made known by the Spirit of God. You cannot separate the wisdom of God from the Spirit of God. The person who does not have the Spirit of God (a result of being a follower of Christ) cannot understand the wisdom of God or the ways of God. In our passage for this morning (2.6-10a) we see 3 characteristics of the wisdom of God. In these verses, these three characteristics are all pointing out the contrast that exists between those who follow the wisdom of God and those who do not. That is very clear from these opening words in verse 6. The wisdom that Paul is speaking of is a message of wisdom among the mature, an intentional word that Paul chose to describe the believers at Corinth, who, while they were believers and were mature in

contrast to the world, were not actually mature believers, a point he really deals with beginning in chapter 3.

1. **God's Wisdom is hidden to the world.** 6-7a

A. **It is not like the “wisdom” of this age.**

Why should Christians be enamored with American idols who win the fading applause of a dying and decaying world? Why should Christians be concerned with the world speaking well of us, when the world has nothing to say that has any eternal significance? Do you remember Psalm 1.6? The wicked not only die but the way of the wicked will perish as well. Why should you follow the world's dying wisdom when trying to solve problems when God has such a better way?

B. **It is not like the rulers of this age.**

Two times Paul uses this phrase in this passage (6,8) and it refers to the political leaders who are considered to be the influential people of his day. Positions of power are not nearly as impressive as people think they are. What is generally the first thing a person does who finally arrives into a prominent position of power? How can I hold on to this position? When a person is elected president, he starts thinking about re-election; same with a Senator, or almost any political office. Why? Political power is very transitory.

Notice how the wording underscores this in a rather haunting way. The rulers of this age are coming to nothing. Rulers, power brokers, movers and shakers, are already doomed to pass away. Already they are becoming irrelevant.

C. **It is wisdom wrapped in mystery.**

While God's wisdom (as we will see in the next point) has always been present, it has not always been understood because it has been wrapped in mystery. The basic meaning of this word mystery is a hidden truth, finally revealed.

Let me give you an example from Romans. Look at 16.25-27 (you only have to turn back in your Bibles a couple of pages). Follow along...”Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation (revealing) of the mystery hidden for long ages past, (ok – it has been wrapped in mystery) but NOW revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him – to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.”

Notice these words (on the screen) “...revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings...” Ok, now, if you have been fading out, and your mental car has been drifting over the traffic lanes, wake up and pay attention, so you can get this. It appears that Paul is saying that the gospel was a mystery that was hidden in the OT, but is now revealed by the OT. Are you

scratching your head here? Wait a minute. Hold the phone for a sec. How can this mystery be hidden in the OT and revealed in the OT? Does that make sense? Yes, because as we will see from verse 10, God's wisdom is revealed by His Spirit. Unless the Spirit gives you the eyes to see, you cannot see the real message and wisdom of God.

Paul's own life is an illustration of this. Before Paul became a follower of Christ, Paul was a – what? A Pharisee! As a Pharisee, did Paul believe the OT to be the Word of God? Yes! But, did Paul believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah? No! But when Paul came to faith in Christ, he went back and read the same words that he had read before. He believed in them just as he believed in them before, but now he understood them in a way that he had not understood them before.

2. **God's Wisdom has always been present.** 7b-9

A. **God's Wisdom (God's way) is predetermined.** (7b)

When you rely upon God's wisdom, you are relying upon truth that has been established before time began. God's wisdom is not a fad. His manner of operating is not in line for an extreme makeover. God does not reinvent Himself. God has not only established his purposes, He has established the means or the way in which His purposes will be accomplished. When you follow His wisdom, you are following that which is absolutely timeless and trustworthy.

In addition to that, it is "for our glory." For you to follow God's wisdom is the means that God has chosen to benefit you.

B. **God's Wisdom (God's way) is misunderstood.** (8)

I mentioned earlier that Paul is establishing a contrast here between those with the Spirit of God and those without. This verse presents some more evidence of this contrast that exists. It is a theme that Paul has been building on even from the last chapter.

We	vs.	They
"Foolish" according to the world (1.26-27)		"Wise" according to the world
lowly (1.28)		rulers of this age (2.6,8)
for our glory (2.7)		coming to nothing (2.6)
those who love him (2.9)		those who crucified the Lord of Glory

By the way, notice the title that Paul uses of Christ in this verse. The Lord of glory means, the Lord, whose essential character is glory, is not only a very clear reference to the deity of Christ but I believe that this is perhaps the highest title that is used in all of the NT to refer to Christ. A similar statement is found in James 2.1 where, interestingly, the younger half-brother of Christ calls Him the glorious Lord Jesus Christ. All of this really heightens the point of this passage.

Look, if you want to follow the wisdom of the world, look at its history. The so-called wise people of the world, were so smart they crucified the Lord of glory! Smart employees do not smash up the boss's car – do they? A truly wise person would not crucify God's Son. But, this event not only demonstrated the total futility of the world's wisdom, but it demonstrated how incredibly profound God's wisdom really is. The ones who thought they were getting rid of Christ, were in reality carrying out God's plan. God used their failure to accomplish His purposes. This passage makes it very clear that the cross was no mere unfortunate event or historical accident or some personal act of bravery throughout a political tug-of-war. The cross is now the crowning moment of the wisdom and purposes of God. It turns the wisdom of this world upside down.

C. God's Wisdom (God's way) is underrated. (9)

Now stop for a minute and remember what this church was so proud of. They were proud of the fact that some of them possessed some secret spiritual knowledge that set them apart from the rest. They were proud of the fact that they had become so spiritual and so mature and so wise, that some of them looked down on Paul and his ministry. Paul is pulling together some passages from the OT and in essence he is saying, "You think you know it all? Huh? You think you are so smart? You think you have arrived? Look, you don't know junk! (Bad grammar but good theology) No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.

If you were so wise, you would know that no one can fully know what God has for those who love Him. But, while that is part of his point, the more obvious point is in his call for the Corinthian believers to set aside their wisdom for God's wisdom, he makes it clear that God's wisdom is very underrated.

3. God's Wisdom is only revealed by His Spirit. 10a