
Godly Wisdom

1. Intro

- In everyone's life there are times when we feel like a fool
 - For some of us that happens more often than others
 - Sadly, for me ... I seem to fall into that category
- One time when I was a Uni, I was standing at a pedestrian crossing waiting for the lights to change
 - A car load of girls pulled up in front of me waiting
 - And I tried to look cool and attractive and nonchalant
 - And the girls started looking at me ... and I thought this is going well
 - And the girls started giggling ... and I thought ... "gee I'm really making an impression here"
 - The lights went green and they drove off
 - And then about 3 secs after they left ... I had this revelation that they weren't giggling because I was so cute, hot or good looking
 - They were laughing at me
 - And it was at that moment I looked down and saw that the fly on my pants was wide open ... for all to see ... especially if you were sitting in a car right in front of me
- I felt like a fool!
 - I feel like a fool now
 - I don't know why I thought that would be a good story to tell publicly to nearly 100 ppl :/

- In life ... we have moments when we feel like a fool
- No one likes to be considered a fool
- We'd much prefer to be considered wise by others than be called a fool

- And in our culture today, just like it was in the culture of 1 Corinthians ... if you're fair dinkum about following Jesus ... the world says you're a fool 24/7
- You see, our world today says ... if you want to be considered wise ... then you won't take Christianity seriously
 - In fact, worldly wisdom says you will mock it ... and you will mock its believers

- But here in 1 Corinthians ... Paul says true wisdom is the opposite to what the world thinks
- And so, if you want to be truly wise ... if you want God's wisdom ... then you need be prepared to be considered a fool

- Now on the face of it that doesn't seem like an attractive proposition
- Why would a person be willing to be labeled a fool?

- That's what we're going to unpack in these verses this morning
- Because being a healthy church means pursuing godly wisdom, not worldly wisdom

2. Corinth

- The church Paul is writing to in Corinth he had started about 4 years earlier
 - Paul had visited Corinth on his second missionary journey and spent 18mths preaching the gospel and telling people about Jesus
- Corinth was a city very much like Sydney
- It was located on important trade routes
 - Which meant it was a city of that was very wealthy and cosmopolitan
 - Also, thoroughly pagan ... with all sorts of idol worship of Greek and Roman gods
 - Known for its sexual immorality, pride, and greed
- Corinth was a city full of sin ... and so was the Corinthian church ... as the culture of the city continued to infect and influence the Christians there
- By the time Paul is writing this letter he had moved on and was most likely in Ephesus ... when he started getting reports and letters from his friends in Corinth outlining some of the issues that were going on there
 - Divisions and disunity
 - Sexual immorality
 - Suing one another
 - Abusing their spiritual freedom
 - Boasting in spiritual gifts
- And so, Paul is writing to urge these Christians in Corinth to live lives that are consistent with what they believe about Jesus as their Lord and Saviour

3. Foolish Message (1:18-25)

- Last week as we looked at 1:1-17 we saw there were divisions and disunity amongst the Corinthians as they aligned themselves behind their favour preacher
- It seems that some like Apollos were known for their powerful preaching, fancy rhetoric and charismatic style
- And in v17 Paul says ... **the power is not in the preaching ... the power is in the message**
- And so, what follows from v18 onwards is an explanation of v17 as he goes on to spell out why the message of the cross is so powerful, despite the world thinking it was so foolish

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- Now when it comes to the message of the cross, Paul says the world is split into two camps
 - We're used to two-way divisions in society
 - Election time > Labour / Liberal
 - State of Origin > Queenslander / New South Wales
 - Cars > Ford v Holden
 - TV > Love 'The Bachelor' / Hate 'The Bachelor'
 - But Paul says ... when it comes the to the message of the cross ... which is all about Jesus Christ and him crucified
 - World is split into two camps ...
 - Those who are perishing
 - Those who are being saved
 - Paul says people right across the spectrum of society reject the message of the cross
 - It's not just the secular humanists who reject Jesus
 - The religious moralists as well
 - You see how Paul says in v22-23 ... the message of the cross is a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks
 - Foolish in Gk = *moria* > get the word moron / moronic
 - Stumbling block in Gk = *scandalon* > get our English word scandal
 - So ... Why is the cross moronic and scandalous!
 - Why is it such a stumbling block for the Jews?
 - The Jews wanted signs and wonders
 - They wanted a glorious king > they expected him to restore the glories of the Kingdom of David and Solomon
 - The Christ wasn't meant to be a shamefully arrested and killed
 - They expected the Christ to be spattered in blood ... but it was the blood of his enemies ... not his own!
 - A crucified Christ! That's not what we're expecting!
 - And so, for the Jews ... the cross was a stumbling block
 - The Greeks on the other hand ... their issue was the whole foolishness of this message
 - Greeks loved wisdom and philosophy
 - The Greeks gave us wisdom and philosophy!
 - They had the great philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle
 - It was common in Paul's day for skilled orators, speakers and philosophers to travel around, entertaining people in the public squares and at parties with sophisticated arguments > clever speeches > fancy words > persuasive logic > they loved that stuff
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- When they heard about this king who'd been crucified ... it didn't make sense > didn't sound wise > it sounded moronic!
 - "A king on a cross ... that's a logical impossibility!"
- And so, for them the message of the cross was moronic / foolishness
- **Illustration – Alexamenos**
- This idea that the message of the cross was foolish to the Greeks is captured in this 3rd century piece of graffiti from Rome
 - Shows a foolish youth worshipping a man with a donkey's head being crucified on a on a cross
 - Under the drawing the inscription – "*Alexamenos worships his God*"
 - Message is clear ... Alexamenos is a fool ... because he worships the Ass-man!
- That's what the world back then thought about Christianity ... and it's what the world still thinks about Christianity today

Power & Wisdom of God

- However, according to Paul, not all people think the cross is foolish
- Those who have Godly wisdom ... see the cross from a different perspective
- Paul says for those who are **being saved** ... those **who believe** ... those **who are called** ... the cross of Christ is the power of God & wisdom of God
- This message that the world thinks is so moronic and scandalous ... is actually the power and wisdom of God ... because it's powerful to save sinners like you and me who are powerless to save themselves
- Worldly wisdom and philosophy ... will get you nowhere when it comes to eternal salvation
 - It's perishing > it won't get you to God
 - It doesn't matter how intelligent, philosophical, or wise you are in the world's eyes ...
 - It won't help you work God out
 - It won't enable you to find God
 - And most significantly ...
 - none of it will deal with the problem of your sin
 - none of it will take away the punishment your rebellion against God deserves
- But Christ crucified does ... for those who believe

- And because the cross is the power of God to save sinners like you and me ... it's wiser than man's wisdom and stronger than man's strength
- And so, while
 - worldly wisdom rejects the cross and thinks it's foolish
 - Godly wisdom says the cross is the power of the God and wisdom of God because it is the only means of forgiveness and salvation
- And so, for those who believe ... the foolish message of Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins is awesome news
- And while worldly wisdom will say it's foolish ... godly wisdom makes it clear the cross is God's power that saves you for eternity

Application

- **Illustration**

- For any of you who need glasses to see will know how difficult it is to read or make things out without them
 - Out for dinner recently and I forgot to take my glasses
 - Couldn't read the menu
 - Even with my Go-Go-Gadget arms ... I couldn't hold the menu away far enough to get things into focus
 - One of my friends gave me their glasses
 - Bam! All of a sudden, I could see
 - But without them ... everything was obscured
- And if worldly wisdom is driving your life ... then you won't see anything impressive about a crucified Christ
- It's like looking at the cross without the right glasses
- It will be obscured to you because you don't have the lens of godly wisdom to see the cross for what it is
- Worldly wisdom says ... the message of the cross
 - Is just dumb
 - It's a crutch to lean on when for those too weak to stand on their own two feet
 - It's a myth
 - Christianity is the stuff of the dark ages
 - Nod you head in agreement with Peter Fitzsimons when he tells Christians they worship a 'Sky Fairy'
- But friends ... hear the warning that God is giving us about this, because
 - if you're in this camp ...
 - if this is the way you think about the cross ... then you're perishing
- Because when Jesus returns, and this age comes to an end ...

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- All the philosophy
 - All the social media rhetoric
 - All the blogs and talk back radio opinions
 - All the mocking of Jesus and the cross
 - Will be shown for what they are
 - It will come to an end
 - You will come to an end with it

 - But you don't need to stay in the camp that is perishing
 - Because God is like the heavenly optometrist who can give you the glasses to see the cross clearly for what it is
 - You see if you're a person here this morning who sees anything other than the foolishness of the cross ... then that is because God is helping you to see this
 - If you've received or are receiving the lens of God's wisdom ... then you **will** see the cross as God's wonderfully wise, powerful and gracious solution to your greatest problem ... the problem of your sin

 - And Paul says in v21 the ones who receive those lenses of Godly wisdom are those who believe
 - And so friends ... if you want to move from the camp that is perishing to the camp that is being saved ...
 - Call out to God and ask him to give you eyes to see the problem of your sin and your need for forgiveness ... so that you might see the wisdom of the cross to save you from the judgment we deserve

 - If you're a Christian here this morning, then it's important to realise that you are always going to come across people who think the cross is foolish
 - Get to Uni ... there'll be people who have very reasoned, logical arguments that undermine the good news of Jesus and portray it and you as foolish
 - And they'll say
 - Science disproves Christianity is real
 - Miracles are a logical impossibility > defies the laws of science
 - Can't see God ... can't provide empirical evidence to prove he exists ... therefore he doesn't exist
 - Very smart lecturers and fellow students who will openly mock Christianity and say or imply that to have faith is anti-intellectual > it's just plain moronic

 - Or you will have work colleagues and friends who think that Christ crucified for the forgiveness of sins ... is ridiculous
 - They will argue that God doesn't exist
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- How can it be true if there is so much suffering in the world?
- Christianity is
 - about controlling the masses
 - cause of violence and wars
- They will want to give you their philosophy and their wisdom ... and say it's Christianity is foolish
- And when they do ...
 - it can be very tempting water down the message of the cross and make it seem more appealing and much wiser in the eyes of your friends
 - it can be very easy to leave out certain things about what you believe so that it seems less foolish to those around you
- And when they do don't be tempted to avoid speaking of the 'foolishness' of Christ crucified
 - Because the message of the cross and a crucified Christ is the very centre of the gospel
 - And if you leave Christ or any part of the cross out of the Christian message ... then you're devoiding the gospel of its power and wisdom
 - *For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.*
 - For it's only through the message of the cross can we be saved

4. Foolish believers (1:26-31)

- Foolishness of the cross is not only seen in the foolishness of the message, but it's also seen in the 'foolish' people who believed this message
 - v26 – *Brothers, 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*
 - v27-28 ... says you were foolish and weak > lowly and despised
- In other words, ... Paul's saying ...
 - Not many of you were smart > not many of you had a powerful job in the city > not many of you had a rich dad
 - From a worldly perspective ... you're weren't a very impressive bunch of people
 - You were a bunch of nobodies
- His point is this ...
 - World says ... cross is foolish ... the bunch of nobodies who believe it just confirms it
 - If it was a truly profound and wise message ... then all the intellectuals, and celebrities would be in on it

- But in v27-28 Paul says ... God did this deliberately
 - He chose the so called 'foolish' people to shame the wise
 - He chose the so called 'weak ones' of the world to shame the strong
 - He chose those what the world looks down upon and despises

- Why?
 - v29 - so that no one can boast before God
 - So that no one can stand before God and sing his or her own praises

- The only reason you and I can stand before God is there in v30
 - Because you are in Christ > Christ has been crucified for your sin
 - And the reason you are in Christ is because God chose you and called you and gave you the glasses to see and believe this foolish message

- It's a reminder of God's grace and mercy
 - And the fact that the church is not made up people who were rock stars and powerbrokers and beautiful ppl ... is to show that membership in God's kingdom has nothing to do with what the world thinks is important ...
 - But it's only by his grace > his calling > his mercy

- **Application**
- You see when God calls **you** and opens **your** eyes to the gospel ... it's not because he looked down from heaven and said
 - "Oooh look ... that person's beautiful
 - "Cool! ... he plays in rock band
 - "Wow! ... she's really smart ... he's got influence
 - I'm picking them ... they're going to be on my team

- If God was looking for impressiveness ... he'd chose none of us
- Instead ...
 - God takes pity and has mercy on you and me
 - And despite ourselves ... he chooses us to be in Christ

- **Illustration – Nick Vujicic / Vuj-ic-itch**
- Australian guy > tetra-amelia syndrome > born without legs or arms
- Bullied at school > thought about taking his life
- He prayed as a young boy for God to give him arms and legs
- Eventually he realised God wasn't going to do that ... and instead God started shaping and molding this guy to show how he could live a life that brings glory to God
- He began to master the daily tasks of life

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- He learned to write > use a computer > throw tennis balls > play drum pedals > get himself a glass of water > comb his hair > brush his teeth > answer the phone and shave
 - School Captain in primary school
 - Completed a double degree in accounting and financial planning
 - Now he tours the world and he speaks to people about Jesus

 - By worldly standards ... Nick's not impressive > not strong > dependent on others
 - By the world's standards he was seen as lowly and despised and shunned
 - But God chose Nick
 - And he is using Nick to shame the wise and shame the strong ... and to show that God chooses people not according to
 - Our wisdom > our strength > what we think matters and is valuable

 - God wants you and I ... he wants the whole world to know that our right standing before God come to us purely and simply because of God
 - Because he chose us
 - Because he made us to be **in Christ**

 - He wants people not to boast in the things they think are impressive ...
 - he wants the people to boast in the Lord > in Christ crucified ... because that's what's truly impressive

 - So rather than boast of your
 - Career achievements
 - How your kids have turned out
 - HSC / Uni results
 - Your involvement at church

 - Instead, boast in the Lord
 - Boast in Christ crucified
 - Point all the glory and honour to him
 - Remind yourself and tell others ... it's because Christ was crucified that you are right with God

 - And when people ask you why you're a Christian and believe in this foolish message
 - You can say
 - "I'm in Christ ... and thank God it had nothing to do with how good I am"
 - "And it's because I'm in Christ ... that I can stand before God and know for certain my eternal future is secure"
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5. Foolish Preachers (2:1-5)

- Not only is the message foolish > and the believers foolish ... but the preacher was also foolish > look at 2:1-5
- Paul says when he came preaching Christ crucified, he didn't come with fancy words or superior wisdom or fine sounding arguments
- In fact, he came in weakness with fear and trembling

- The philosophers and orators of Paul's day were a common sight in places like Corinth
 - They entertained and informed and lectured ppl of the day with their fancy words, humour and impressive arguments
 - Like modern day talk back radio hosts
 - Alan Jones > Ray Hadley
 - TV Hosts like
 - Waleed Aly > The Project
 - These guys are smooth talkers > intelligent > opinionated > powerful in speech > and result is they influenced public thought and opinion

- Paul says ... I didn't come to you like that
 - I'm no Alan Jones or Ray Hadley or Waleed Aly
 - I'm just plain old Paul
 - I didn't try and win you over with powerful words or fancy speech
 - Compared to them ... I was a fool
 - But I resolved to do one thing ... preach Jesus Christ and him crucified

- Why was that?
 - v5 – *so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.*
 - In other words, ... Paul's saying ...
 - God didn't want you to be persuaded by my powerful preaching
 - God wanted you to be persuaded by the power of the message of Jesus Christ crucified for the forgiveness of your sins
 - He wanted you to be captured by the message ... not the how well the message was delivered
 - He wanted you to be blown away by what was preached ... not by the preacher

- **Application**
- Remember watching Barak Obama during his Presidential campaign (2008) and being totally blown away by his speaking skills
 - Way he moved about the platform
 - No notes

- Measured > confident > engaging
- And I remember thinking ...
 - “Wow! ... I wish I could preach like that”
 - “I wish I could speak powerfully like that”
 - “How much better would my preaching be”
 - “How much more would ppl listen and pay attention and take to heart what I had to say!”
- But what Paul is saying to preachers like me here in 1 Corinthians reminds me ... that the power is not in the preacher ... but in what is preached
 - And I need to remember my persuasiveness, my speech, my words are not what are going to change ppl and convert ppl
 - What’s going to change and convert ppl ... is when I preach Jesus Christ and him crucified
- At the end of the day ... the humble preacher who faithfully stands and declares the gospel ... is more powerful than Barak Obama
 - Not because of how he preaches ... but because of the message he proclaims
- And this is super helpful for us in the age of online sermons, Youtube and podcasts
- Because it gives us a criterion for working out whether the person we’re listening to is worth it or not
- Because the principal of what Paul is saying here is ... it doesn’t matter
 - How funny they are
 - Whether they tell great stories
 - Touch our emotions
 - Speak with power and conviction
 - What does matter is ... do they preach Christ and him crucified?
- And so, if you come away from listening to a sermon and the main thing you remember
 - How amazing the preacher was > what the preacher was like > their funny stories > and their wise words
 - but don’t remember the passage ... then we’re in danger of being worldly like the Corinthians
- Much better is when you hear a sermon and you go away and think
 - Jesus is amazing
 - God’s is so wise
 - The thing that impacted my heart was the word of God ... not the rhetoric, wisdom, passion of the preacher

- Godly wisdom understands the ... **the power is not in the preaching ... the power is in the message of cross**
- Now ... remembering that the power is in the message and not in the person ... helps you be bold in sharing your faith with others
- It liberates you from being scared about sharing the gospel with people
 - Because it doesn't depend on how skilled you are
 - Doesn't depend on you having an answer for every question
 - Doesn't depend on you blowing people away with a knock-down argument that blows their mind away
 - You just need to share Jesus Christ and him crucified for the forgiveness of sins
 - Because that's where the power is
 - And God takes that seed you've planted and ... and by the power of his HS he convicts those he has called of its truth ... and leads them to repentance and faith

6. Conclusion

- World says
 - the cross is moronic and scandalous
 - Look at Christians and the church and say 'you're not that impressive'
 - Its preachers aren't impressive
- It just confirms to them that the message of the cross is a joke

- But to you who are being saved ... to you with lenses to see ... it's the power of God and wisdom of God
 - Because through the cross ...
 - God is able to do what we cannot do ... which is to save those who believe

- So, don't worry about what worldly wisdom says about the cross and what you believe
- Seek after Godly wisdom
 - *For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.*

PRAY