

We Preach Christ-Crucified!

† The Power of God (vv.18-19,25)

† The Wisdom of God (vv.20-25)

In the name of Christ-Crucified, dearly redeemed saints of God:

It can take a long time to figure out how to get into church. Some doors look more inviting than others. How do you teach your child the right door into “God’s house” if you’re not sure? Or you may explain many times but after a while you have to let your child learn the hard way going to the wrong door a few times. Sometimes that’s the only way we can learn.

Unfortunately, we can never find God that way. We don’t realize it, but when it comes to spiritual things, by nature we are deaf and blind. God has to show us the way to His house in heaven. Just as you might call to someone going to the wrong door, God calls out to us in His Word through His apostles and preachers still today. At God’s command **We Preach Christ-Crucified!**

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Have you ever watched moths trying to fly into a light? Summer times they swarm around street lights as over and over again they smash into the bulb. They can’t get in, but they can’t stop themselves from trying. The next day you find them dead on the sidewalk.

Sad to say, but that’s a picture of us human beings trying to break into the bright light of God’s heaven. If someone stood down below trying to explain to a moth why he should stop flying into the light, the moth could not understand. Likewise, we don’t have the power or understanding to stop pushing for enough money or knowledge or personal pleasure to make our lives happy. The harder we try to enjoy a little slice of heaven here on earth, the farther we get from God. Like the flying moth, we just wear ourselves out trying to get rich then lose everything in death anyway.

But have you heard? **“God is love.”** (1 John 4:8) God is like that compassionate father in today’s Gospel Lesson (Luke 15:11-32) waiting anxiously, watching the road for His long lost son to come home. And when he does, the Father is moved with compassion to run to his son to welcome him. The son confesses, **“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.”** He planned to also add, **“Make me like one of your servants.”** But it seems the Father does not wait for him to finish. And in spite of the older brother’s anger, the happy Father just wants to celebrate having his **“dead”** son home alive and well again. That’s patient, steady, determined **“love.”**

Jesus’ beautiful story shows **The Power of God** in this message and why **We Preach Christ-Crucified!** A son who refuses to repent and come home to his father or a moth that keeps flying into a light bulb can’t stop and turn around. But the cross calls us back to God with a **Power** all its own because God put His **Power** in this great Good News. ***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. For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”***

If someone stood a ladder in the middle of the street and started climbing, you’d ask, “What are you doing?” If he said, “I’m climbing up to heaven,” wouldn’t you say, “Your ladder is too short. You can’t get there from here!”? It does seem foolish to go up by kneeling down beside the cross. But **“I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”** (Romans 1:16 NIV) God kills us to make us alive. He brings us down in order to raise us up. He convicts us of our sin to forgive us one and all. He humbles our pride in order to bring us home. We trust God’s way. **We Preach Christ-Crucified** as the Savior of all.

The Wisdom of God (vv.20-25)

Bug lovers may not like this, but I used to enjoy watching bugs fry. After years of working on my grandfather's ranch swatting crazy mosquitoes, we found a satisfying solution. Someone invented a "Bug Light." The black light above drew them in, and an electric mesh down below fried them as they flew around. Moths would make especially bright fires when they immolated themselves on the "Bug Light."

God could let us all fry on our own conceit. How many religious leaders have tried to find their own way to God, but failed? Where are they now? ***"Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age?"*** Some people are so wise in their own eyes, they will not listen to the one true God, the God of the Bible. They consider themselves scholars with many admirers. Others just want to argue. No matter what you tell them the Bible says, they have their own philosophy. Christianity for them is just another philosophy for debate. They ignore the things the Bible does say and argue things it does not. They show their true colors by constantly asking questions but never being satisfied with the answers God gives in the Holy Scriptures of the Bible. Where are they now? Mostly dead and gone. Sigmund Freud, Charles Darwin, Karl Marx – they've all met their Maker while others have come along to discredit their work and offer new ideas and philosophies in their own name.

See why Paul asks this? ***"Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 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."*** One Jewish rabbi on the radio said, "We don't want a Messiah who died on a cross!" So God gives His cross of Christ-Messiah as the *only* way to heaven. That really irritates some to say, "Jesus is the *only* way," but do you remember Him asking in the Garden of Gethsemane? ***"My Father, if it is possible, may this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."*** (Matthew 26:39) Do you remember the Father's answer? Silence! Deafening silence that shouted, "There is no other way!" Jesus had to die on the cross. And **We Preach Christ-Crucified!**

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles... God knows this will trip people up. But He refuses to bend to man's power or wisdom. We will come to God on His terms, or we might just as well try to climb a ladder in the middle of the street, or fly like a moth into a light bulb. God gave a "sign" to the Jewish shepherds when the angel said, ***"This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."*** (Luke 2:12 NIV) Magi followed the star to Bethlehem, but not the Jews. Jesus told His fellow Jews that the only sign for them would be ***"the sign of Jonah."*** (Matthew 16:4) Like Jonah in the fish three days, so Jesus would rise from the grave in three days. Jews trip, non-Jews laugh.

"But to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength." That reminds me of when my brother and I built a go-cart with wheels nailed to cedar axletrees. Roc and the big neighbor boy pushed while I drove – about three feet. The wheels collapsed on three disappointed engineers. How goes man's go-cart against God's SUV?

The story is told of a little girl lost in London just as it was getting dark. A policeman found her sobbing. "Do you live near a store?" he asked. "What about a hospital? Is there mall nearby?" She just cried harder, "No, I can't find my home." Finally the policeman asked, "Is there a church nearby?" "Yes!" she said as her eyes lit up. "Just show me the church with the cross, and I'll know my way home."

In earth's fading darkness man's wisdom and power have failed to end war and hunger, disease and depression. The harder we try, the worse things get. And instead of solving the question of life after death, most people just deny it or claim there are many doors into God's house wherever it is. More than ever the world needs this message. **We Preach Christ-Crucified!** Here is the forgiveness of sins, the peace that surpasses all understanding, the redemption God gives at the price of the Messiah's poured out blood. Christ is God's **Power**. Christ is God's **Wisdom**. And the cross is the way home. Come home with joy in Jesus! Amen.