

We Preach Christ Crucified!

✠ **Stumbling foolishness** (vv.22-24)

✠ **Powerful wisdom** (vv.24-25)

In the Name of Jesus, God's power and wisdom, dearly redeemed children of God:

It was on the radio when I was in grade school: "I want you – Yeh, Yeh, Yeh – I want you..." Yes, the Beatles, 1966 U.S. tour. Controversial because five months earlier John Lennon said: "Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn't argue about that; I'm right and I'll be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus now; I don't know which will go first – rock 'n' roll or Christianity. Jesus was all right but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It's them twisting it that ruins it for me."¹ Lennon was murdered in 1980 by a man claiming to be a "born-again" Christian.

Many still agree with Lennon. But this was nothing new. 2000 years earlier Saul of Tarsus was determined to kill Christianity. He didn't care about rock music; Hebrew Psalms in the temple were better. But Saul was sure Jesus was crucified, dead and buried. For Jesus' disciples to claim He was alive again and do miracles in Jesus' name made Saul persecute Christians. Then the crucified Christ appeared to Saul and proved He was alive. Jesus made Paul His Apostle to write: **We Preach Christ Crucified!**

✠ **Stumbling foolishness** (vv.22-24)

The Bible is so honest. In the Ten Commandments of today's First Lesson God commands, "You shall not murder." So the man who murdered John Lennon was just as evil as those who kill babies by abortion or want to get rid of the elderly and disabled by what they call, "Euthanasia," or "Mercy Death." *"Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him."* (1 John 3:15) Murderers and rock stars miss this: *"Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."*

Have you ever wished the Almighty God would come down and destroy all the enemies of His Church? Eventually, God will, but it's not our job. The Holy Spirit says through Peter, *"The Lord is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."* (2 Peter 3:9 NIV84) God proved His power in Egypt and in the desert by miracles through Moses, but then His chosen people of Israel rebelled. His fellow Jews didn't like Jesus because they stumbled over His meekness and tenderness for sinners. They thought they were better than everyone else. Are we like that as Christians?

If you had to make a choice between seeing the doctor or your pastor, which would you choose? Most American Christians would say, "That's a no-brainer. Wouldn't it be foolish to see your pastor instead of your doctor?" Can the doctor keep alive? Why doesn't he then? Who gives life to your body now and forever? Who soothes your eternal soul? Are we like these *Gentiles*, non-believers? Do we ultimately put man's wisdom over God's by choosing medicine or education over God's Word?

Truth be told, we stumble on the weakness of God in Christ. And we turn away from God when His wisdom sounds foolish. How could it help me to admit that I am a wretched sinner living in *"this body of death"* (Romans 7:24f)? How can it help my family to admit I'm not the father, husband, friend I should be? How can this help my ministry or this congregation? **We Preach Christ Crucified!**

¹ Original: Cleave, Maureen (5 October 2005). ["The John Lennon I knew"](http://en.wikipedia.org). *The Daily Telegraph*. <http://en.wikipedia.org>

† Powerful wisdom (vv.24-25)

One of the ladies mentioned maybe starting a shooters' club. Which raises a question for me: How do you know your gun is accurate? Gun makers test the sights by removing the human element with a rigid holder. Line it all up, see where the bullet hits the target, adjust the sight accordingly. Test, retest, lock it down. Same thing with tools and toys like boats and trucks. You can't see the power or the beauty of the design until you take it to the limit and see how it performs – whatever it is.

Life with God is like that. This all sounds weak and foolish until something happens to you. Here's the secret in Paul's simple words: "...*those whom God has called...*" You're in the dark about real life on earth and eternal life in heaven until God calls you "*out of the darkness into his wonderful light.*" (1 Peter 2:9) Then the lights go on and you start to enjoy the **Powerful wisdom** of **Christ-Crucified**.

Lent gives us this glorious opportunity to hear about our Savior's Passion, Jesus suffering and death on the cross, during midweek Lenten services. This focus is not available in any other services. How can busy people take the time? How can they stay awake after a long day's work? Some of us stay awake during the sermons because God makes us preachers. Others come sincerely confessing their sins and find that Jesus' **Powerful wisdom** picks you up and energizes you more than you can imagine.

John Lennon wrote that song, "Imagine," all about imagining life without God. I can't imagine raising teenagers without God. Once I was praying really hard as one of my teenagers was angrily asking why we had so many rules at home. Sound familiar? God gave me an analogy that helped then and still helps teenagers now. I told my dear child-adult, "It's as if you're standing in two boats. One foot in the adult boat, one the kid's boat. These boats are pulling apart. Mom and Dad want you in the adult boat, but you're not ready to make the jump yet. It will happen. Until then it's hard on everyone one. But please realize, we do want you in the adult boat. We're praying for you to get there."

The other day God showed me His **Powerful wisdom** again by a phone call from one of our shut-ins. I've been trying for months to visit her and her husband to strengthen their faith with God's Word and sacrament. But there was always a doctor's appointment or social workers. And they're a ways away. So I prayed. Sometimes these challenges and heartaches are so heavy I have to drag them to the cross. But the Holy Spirit always steps up and says, "Here, let me help you with that." He picks up my problem and me at the same time. Our dear member called me up and said, "You just come when you can. You don't have to call ahead. The others can wait. This is more important." When I asked her to pray for me too, she said, "Give it to God. That's what you taught us. Practice what you preach."

God's **wisdom** is so **Powerful** that it still bears fruit in old age. After yesterday's Church Leaders' Workshop in Belle Plaine, I stopped in to visit Doris Schmutge in the memory unit at The Lutheran Home. The nurse woke her, and she barely recognized me. I said, "I came to see how you're doing." Doris quipped, "How and I doing?" Still funny. I said, "Our Father," she finished the prayer.

Meanwhile, Elders Roger and Rolf with their wives Flash and Sandy, visited Fred Schmutge. Son Karl says they're 94. Fred drove alone to our 25th Anniversary worship service last October. According to their detailed report, they had a great visit hearing how God has used Fred over the years to help start this mission and bless other congregations too. During hugs "Good-bye," someone said, "We'll do this again but it's 1 ½ hour drive." Fred thought a minute then said, "It only takes me one hour."

Let the rich and famous say what they want about Christianity. Each of them has one more heartbeat and one more breath as God gives to each of us. But for a couple like Fred and Doris married 67 years or newlyweds or teenagers and little kids living life with God, we see how "*the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.*" "None but His loved ones know." And by God's grace, we are His loved ones. Amen.

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