

Theme: Jesus Revealed - The Wisdom of God

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (ESV)

²⁶ For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

There was a popular game show on TV a number of years ago called “Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?” (Maybe it’s still on TV somewhere, I’m not sure.) Have you ever seen it? In this game show contestants have to answer questions that are supposed to have been taken from the school textbooks on various topics for 1st through 5th graders. If the contestant gets a question wrong and is eliminated he or she is supposed to face the camera and shamefully admit that they are not “Smarter than a 5th Grader.”

My parents got the home version of this game as a “family present” a few Christmases ago and I remember my family and I having fun playing it a few times during that Christmas break. But we all had to admit, the game is not as easy as it sounds. Some of those questions are quite hard (unless, of course, you’re a very studious 5th grader who’s just had many of these questions in school!).

For example, do you know the answers to these sample questions from the game? “*A pony express rider’s last stop heading east was what state?*” Or how about, “*Which president’s head is right next to Lincoln’s on Mt. Rushmore?*”

If you don’t know the answer to one or both of these questions does that mean you’re really not “Smarter than a 5th Grader?” Of course not! Part of the problem for most of us is that it’s been a long time (for some of us a VERY long time) since we’ve been 5th graders and we’ve forgotten many of the things we learned back then. Also, most often the questions pertain to things that are essentially “trivial,” or useless, knowledge so there really is no shame in not knowing the answers to many of them. Knowing the answers to these types of questions probably isn’t that important to your everyday life...unless of course you find yourself on the game show with a chance to win up to a million dollars (or if are playing the board game for the all-important family “bragging rights)!

Our text for this morning speaks of some knowledge and wisdom that is definitely not “trivial” or useless, but is actually the most important **wisdom** a person can ever have. It is a **wisdom** that by God’s grace He has given each one of us through the Holy Spirit. It is the knowledge of faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior from sin. Our text says in **v. 30**, that Christ Jesus is the One “**whom God made our wisdom.**” Our Scripture reading from earlier also called Christ “**the power of God and the wisdom of God**” (1 Cor. 1:24). This is the third sermon in our Epiphany series on some of the ways Jesus is **revealed**, in the Bible. This morning we will consider how He is **The Wisdom of God.**

Compared to this **wisdom** all other knowledge is essentially “trivial” and insignificant. Now that doesn’t mean that there aren’t other kinds of **wisdom** and knowledge that are very useful and good for this life. We need to know certain things in order to perform our jobs. We need to learn certain things in order to prepare for our future careers, or to be good spouses or parents. Think of how useful and helpful are the **wisdom** and knowledge that doctors and nurses have; or that of teachers,

professors, and researchers; or those working in technology fields; or auto mechanics, plumbers, builders, farmers, or even government officials! In fact, we need a certain amount and certain kinds of **wisdom** and knowledge just to function properly and go about the tasks of our everyday life, don't we?

But the world we live in and our own fallen human nature want us to believe that these types of **wisdom** and knowledge are the highest kinds there are. They believe that that which man can study, learn, and reason out from this world and in this world are the pinnacle of all knowledge and **wisdom** that exists. In fact, a good number of people who are considered by this world to be the "best and brightest," the most learned and intelligent people on the planet scoff at this **Wisdom of God**, and consider it to be nothing but foolishness, and consider those who rely on and trust in Christ to be "simple minded" and foolish as well. Our Scripture reading and sermon text from first Corinthians chapter one both spoke about this, "**For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. (1 Corinthians 1:18).**

For all its impressiveness, for all its practicality and usefulness the wisdom of this world has its limits and will eventually come to an end. Those diplomas and degrees that are hanging on our walls which we worked and studied so hard to obtain will eventually fade and much of that wisdom and knowledge will someday become obsolete or forgotten. The skills and understanding that people train so hard for in their jobs and careers will eventually come to an end at retirement and all our knowledge and wisdom will come to an end completely when we die. All the wisdom and knowledge of this world is temporary. Paul wrote in our Scripture reading, **For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (1 Corinthians 1:19-20).**

Man's wisdom has serious limitations, especially when you consider the fact that man's wisdom in all its perceived glory cannot even answer *definitively* some of the great questions of life: Who are we? Where did we come from? Where are we going? And, how do we get there? Man's wisdom is indeed "foolish" compared to God's.

Only the **Wisdom of God** can truly answer these questions and He has answered them in His Son Jesus, who is the "**wisdom of God**" and the very "**Word of God**" made flesh. Again, Paul writes in our Scripture reading, "**For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe...Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men**" (1 Corinthians 1:21, 25).

In reality, those of us who are "simple minded" in the eyes of the world are in actuality among the wisest people on the planet! Not because we are "smarter" or "greater" than the wisest of the world. As I look out over our congregation I see some very intelligent and very talented people whom God has blessed with tremendous gifts. But there are many people in this world who are more intelligent, more influential, and more powerful than we who are gathered here. In fact, Paul makes this very point in the first verse of our text, "**For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.**" (v. 26).

We are also not somehow "better" or even more apt to understand and believe this great **Wisdom of God** as revealed in Jesus Christ than the worldly wise. It was revealed to us simply and completely by God's grace and power through the Word of God. Paul writes in our text, "**But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;**" ²⁸ **God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring**

to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. ³¹ Therefore, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” (v. 27-31).

So, “Are you Smarter than a 5th Grader?” Maybe you are, maybe you aren’t. Maybe you wouldn’t be able to answer the question “*How many of the 7 continents begin with the letter ‘A’?*” Or “*If you’re traveling down the Nile River, what direction are you going?*” (By the way, the answers to the “trivia questions” from this sermon are: Missouri, Theodore Roosevelt, 4, and North).

Those are “trivial,” unimportant questions. The question that needs to be asked is: Do you know Jesus? By the grace of God I pray that we are all able to answer that question with a confident: “Yes!” If you know Jesus by faith then you know the answers to the great questions of life:

- † ***Who are we?*** Through the death of Jesus on that horrible, yet wonderful cross we are forgiven. Through faith in Him we are the very children of God!
- † ***Where did we come from?*** We are unique and special creations of God designed and fashioned by His hand.
- † ***Where are we going, and how do we get there?*** We are headed for heaven because Jesus has made us God’s heirs and has guaranteed us eternal life by His resurrection from the dead.

Those are questions and answers that are beyond the scope of any 5th grader or any mind of man for that matter. And yet, they have been revealed to us by the grace of God’s Spirit through the Word of God so that we have been able to answer those questions by faith from the time we were able to sing, “Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so!” That is true wisdom! This Wisdom of God in Christ will make you truly wise in this life and for eternity! Amen.