Lent 3 1 Corinthians 1:22-25
March 7, 2021 385-401-397/286-579

"Christ Crucified"
I. God has called us to believe in Christ crucified.
II. God has called us to share Christ crucified.

Dear Christian friends,

Think of some of the **hymns we sing**. Last week we sang, "DRAWN TO THE CROSS which You have blessed" with that refrain of, "**Christ crucified**, I come." We also sang, "IN THE CROSS of Christ I Glory." We have that **big cross above** our altar and **a cross** on the steeple. **Many of us** probably have a **cross or two** on some walls at home.

Contrast that with what Paul wrote here, ***"Christ crucified - offensive to Jews and foolishness to Greeks."*** But it's not just Jews and Gentiles who are offended by Christ and His cross. This was in the **Daily Citizen** quite a few years ago. The lady was writing about how much she enjoys Lent. She calls Ash Wednesday her **"favorite church service."** She calls herself **"a churchgoing atheist."** Then she went on (quote article).

Today we look closely at THE HEART of Lent – the **very heart** of the gospel and our Christian faith – ***"Christ crucified."*** 1)God has called us to believe in ***"Christ crucified"*** and 2)God has called us to share ***"Christ crucified."***

I. Called to believe in Christ crucified.

"Christ crucified." The cross has become the RECOGNIZED SIGN of Christianity. A **cross** identifies a church as a **Christian** church. Many wear a cross as a REMINDER that they **are Christians**.

But in Corinth, **Greece**, in Paul's day, the cross was SEEN ONLY as a method of torture and **execution**. The **Romans** effectively used the cross to MAKE THE POINT – you don't mess with Rome! Roman law recognized that the cross was VERY CRUEL. **Roman citizens** could not be crucified. **Under Roman law** only conquered people – rebels and slaves could be crucified.

Picture it this way. **Say Jesus** had died in an ELECTRIC CHAIR instead of on a cross. Then we would have an **electric chair** on the altar. We would sing, "**Christ** ELECTROCUTED, I come!" We would joyfully confess that we **find our salvation** in our GOD who was fried in an electric chair. **Then** we'd have a picture of Jesus **strapped into** the electric chair on our walls. GET THE PICTURE? ***"We preach Christ CRUCIFIED"*** – Christ executed on a cross.

"Christ crucified" is not what people were LOOKING FOR. ***"Jews ask for (miraculous) signs."*** Jesus did so many ***"(miraculous) signs"*** – healing the sick – stilling the storm – raising dead people, etc., but that's NOT WHAT the Jews wanted. They wanted a MIGHTY DELIVER from the **Romans**. They wanted a **Messiah who'd give** them an EASY LIFE on earth. So they were ***"offended"*** - they were TURNED OFF by Jesus. They'd rather die than follow a ***"crucified"*** Savior.

"Greeks desire wisdom." Just think HOW GULLIBLE we Christians look to unbelievers. The virgin – VIRGIN! – Mary had a **baby** who IS GOD Himself – the Son of God IN THE FLESH. Jesus is BOTH GOD and man **at the same time**. Look at **Holy Week** – Jesus ridiculed – spit running down His face. Hanging on the cross Jesus looked like a BIG FRAUD and a PATHETIC LOSER. How can people be SO STUPID and GULLIBLE as to actually claim ***"Christ crucified"*** as their ALMIGHTY GOD and **loving Savior**?

To our reason ***"Christ crucified"*** is RIDICULOUS. ***"But to those who are called …Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God."*** It took God Himself to lead us to TRUST in ***"Christ crucified."*** That we are Christians is ALL GOD'S DOINGS.

BY FAITH we see ***"Christ crucified"*** as God's ***"wisdom"*** – HOW SMART God is! **Unlike us** God clearly understood the situation. We were guilty sinners – **not** BASICALLY GOOD, decent people. We were doomed to be damned to hell forever and we couldn't do anything about it. IF we were to be saved GOD would have to do it for us and there was no good reason for God to do that.

God came up with a **plan** NOBODY ELSE would **ever have thought** of. God sent His own ***"beloved Son"*** to be our Savior. The Son of God was born a man and took the place of **all** people under God's law. Jesus TOOK OVER for us and took care of everything to save us. IN OUR PLACE Jesus lived the perfect life we never could. **In our place** Jesus was ***"crucified."*** Jesus died on the cross NOT as a helpless victim but as the ALL-SUFFICIENT SACRIFICE for the sins of the world. Jesus may have looked SO HELPLESS on the cross but He actually did what NOBODY ELSE could - Jesus personally paid for all our sins in full. What looks SO STUPID to the world makes our forgiveness a SURE THING – ***"Christ crucified."***

BY FAITH we see ***"Christ crucified"*** as ***"the power of God."*** ***"Christ crucified"*** is God's POWER OVER sin and guilt – death – the **devil** and hell. In ***"Christ crucified"*** we have God's forgiveness full and free. In ***"Christ crucified"*** we are set free from all GUILT – **set free** from the devil's power and **control**. In ***"Christ crucified"*** we win the victory over death and hell. It's NOT ***"Christ crucified"*** and His **Christians** who are losers. It's the devil and **his followers** who are the REAL LOSERS.

God has called us to BELIEVE in ***"Christ crucified."*** God has also…

II. Called us to share Christ crucified.

God is COUNTING ON each one of us to share ***"Christ crucified"*** with other people. That's why reaching out to our **friends** and **neighbors** and supporting mission work should be TOP PRIORITIES for us and our congregation.

God calls us to share ***"Christ crucified"*** even though Christ and His cross are STILL OFFENSIVE. Many people are still like the Jews ***"asking for (miraculous) signs."*** Jesus and His **bloody cross** are not what they are LOOKING FOR. They want a God who PROMISES them an easy life now – a good life – good health, etc. **They want God** to get rid of all the **problems and pains** in their lives.

Many people are still like the Greeks ***"desiring wisdom."*** ***"Christ crucified"*** is OLD-FASHIONED and out of date. **We live** in a modern world – they want something MORE than a **Guy nailed** to a cross and **executed**.

We certainly want to DO THE BEST we can to share ***"Christ crucified"*** but we will never be able to GET RID of the ***"offense"*** of the cross. We should certainly try to be a FRIENDLY, **welcoming** church. We should keep our property **looking nice**. We want our services to be UPLIFTING and **edifying**. We want the sermons to be **interesting** and **inspiring**. But THE OFFENSE of the cross remains. ***"Christ crucified"*** must clearly be the HEART of our **worship** and **hymns** and **sermons** and ***"Christ crucified"*** turns people OFF. ***"Christ crucified"*** turns people AWAY and we can't do anything to **change** that.

"We preach Christ crucified." The word preach **simply means** to PROCLAIM – make an ANNOUNCEMENT. It's the herald proclaiming the **king's message**. The herald doesn't MAKE UP the message. He dare not CHANGE the message! He simply repeats the message – TELLS others what **he's been told**.

God calls us to HERALD HIS LAW to show people their sin and guilt – their desperate need for ***"Christ crucified."*** God's law OFFENDS people. It's judgmental – GOD JUDGING us and our behavior. God's law makes clear that GOD DEFINES right and wrong and so much of **what we do** is JUST PLAIN WRONG. We heard those commandments in the OT reading. **Each one** is a direct order from God Himself. God claims TOTAL CONTROL of every minute and every part of our lives – STARTING with God always coming **first** in our lives. God will accept NOTHING LESS than **perfect** obedience to **all ten** of those commandments. God promises to punish **anything less** than perfect obedience.

God's law OFFENDS people. "God can't expect us to be perfect. God would never send anyone to hell." People don't want a HOLY God because they know they are UNHOLY.

God calls us to HERALD THE GOSPEL – ***"Christ crucified"*** – as God's answer – the ONLY answer! – to our sin and guilt. We ARE SO BAD that only God could save us. God is SO GRACIOUS that He actually sent His Son to be our Savior. Jesus is ***"Our Righteousness"*** – He lived the perfect life for us. ***"Christ crucified"*** is ***"the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."***

God calls us to SHARE ***"Christ crucified"*** confidently. There's NO NEED for us to apologize for our Christian faith. There's **no need** to FEEL FOOLISH doing what God has told us to do! ***"Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."*** God Himself is not ***"foolish"*** or ***"weak."*** But God does things that SEEM FOOLISH or LOOK WEAK to people. But those supposedly ***"foolish and weak"*** things really show HOW WISE and POWERFUL God is.

"Preaching Christ crucified" looks ***"foolish."*** We DON'T ARGUE anyone into believing. We simply proclaim the FACTS of the gospel and let those facts SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES. Those simple facts of the gospel are ***"the power of God unto salvation to all who believe."***

Baptizing babies looks ***"foolish."*** WHAT GOOD can that do? Water can't save anyone. Ah, but how wise God is! Baptism is "NOT JUST PLAIN water but water used by God's command and **connected** with God's Word." Baptism is GOD AT WORK making us Christians.

Holy Communion looks ***"foolish."*** WHAT GOOD can this do? But HOW FOOLISH man is to doubt the power and **Word** of God! ***"Nothing is impossible with God"*** INCLUDING Jesus using simple bread and wine to actually give us the VERY SAME body and blood He gave into death for our forgiveness.

What SEEMS so ***"weak"*** and ***"foolish"*** in MAN'S EYES is the ***"wisdom and power"*** of God to save! A couple verses after this Paul wrote, ***"God chose the foolish things of the world to put to shame those who are wise. God chose the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are strong, and God chose the lowly things of the world and the despised things, …so that no one may boast before God. God did this so that, just as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.'"***

That includes you and me ***"boasting"*** about Jesus AND HIS CROSS. To many ***"Christ crucified is offensive and foolishness. But to us who are being saved – Christ the power and wisdom of God."*** Amen.

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