

## **Lenten Wisdom**

*1 Corinthians 1:18-25*

INTRO:

Wisdom. **A new broom sweeps clean but an old broom knows the corners.** Virgin Islander (on friendship)

**Common sense is genius dressed in its working clothes.**

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)

**It is inhumane, in my opinion, to force people who genuinely have a medical need for coffee to wait in line behind people who apparently view it as some kind of recreational activity.**

Dave Barry

ME:

**What is wisdom?**

The Bible says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Wisdom is knowing when to talk and when to be silent.

It is knowing what to say and it is knowing what not to say.

Wisdom is realizing how little you really know and who to turn to for the answers.

This is how I would describe wisdom.

YOU:

**How would you describe wisdom?**

*Perhaps you are too wise to even try!*

Why don't we see what Paul can teach us about wisdom.

GOD:

***18 For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.***

**19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."**

**20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?**

**21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe.**

**22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom,**

**23 but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,**

**24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**

**25 For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.**

WE:

The verses before this give us the general idea that Christ is not divided.

Then verse 18 through chapter 4 unpack this idea.

Paul starts out showing that the world does not think like God does.

[To the world, God's \*\*wisdom\*\* seems \*\*foolish\*\*.](#)

Paul Clearly proclaims in this beginning the "**foolishness of the cross**."

Paul wants the Corinthians to know that God's normal way of operating is to use the weak and the foolish to emphasize his superior strength and wisdom.

Some of the Corinthians, though, were emphasizing their own power and wisdom.

It reminds me of a 9 year old who applied to NASA:

*When NASA posted a job opening recently for a "Planetary Protection Officer," a position responsible for the microbial footprint of humans during interplanetary exploration, word about the "coolest job ever" was picked up and spread widely by the media.*

*Of course, the position has extremely stringent qualifications and demands an expertise in just about every discipline of science possible: physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics, and engineering. However, those re-*

quirements didn't stop 9-year-old Jack Davis from submitting a handwritten note to NASA as his application.

"I may be nine but I think I would be fit for the job," wrote Jack.

"One of the reasons is my sister says I am an alien. Also, I have seen almost all the space movies and alien movies I can see."

He then cited his plans to watch *Men in Black* as further reason why he should get the job.

"I am young, so I can learn to think like an alien," he concluded.

Although the informal application did not result in a job offer, it did merit a response from NASA's Director of Planetary Science Jim Green, who wrote back: "We are always looking for bright future scientists and engineers to help us, so I hope you will study hard and do well in school. We hope to see you here at NASA one of these days."

***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.***

God's way of thinking is different from the way most people think, especially those who are wise according to the way of the world.

The mysterious will and plan of God is not the kind of plan humans would have created.

The message of the cross surely must have seemed ridiculous to many of Paul hearers.

The cross is a positive symbol of God's grace to us.

We sing hymns about it, decorate our churches with it, and wear it as jewelry.

In Paul's day, it was an instrument of capital punishment, used by the Romans to rub their power in the noses of anyone who might oppose them.

***Would you wear a hangman's noose or guillotine around your neck?***

***What about a syringe to symbolize death by injection or a tiny model electric chair?***

*It must have seemed **ridiculous** to the people of Paul's day to suggest that the capital punishment of a Jewish criminal on a cross by the Romans was symbolic of Christ's victory or God's grace!*

Paul defends the mysteriousness of God's wisdom from the standpoint of human wisdom.

Paul gives a Scriptural justification:

***For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate” (1:19).***

Verse 20 shows us that God in Christ turned worldly wisdom on its head.

Worldly wisdom would think that since God is all-powerful and in control, he should force the world to submit to his rule.

But God did not force a sinful world to submit or conform to his will.

Somehow it was in the wisdom of God that the world would not know him through its wisdom.

God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to invite us in, not to force us to follow him.

God in his “**foolishness**” chose preaching and **invitation** as his favored methods of evangelism. God’s preferred method is to invite.

*It is better to attract others to our way of life by modeling God’s power in our lives.*

If the Greeks found the crucifixion foolish, many Jews found it offensive.

The Romans hoisted their opposition up naked in public so that everyone could see what happened to those who dared stand against Roman rule.

Many Jews thought the messiah would be victorious in battle over the Romans.

One sign of Messiah would be military and political victory.

**Did Paul really mean to suggest that God’s messiah showed his victory by dying on the Roman tool of shame and humiliation?**

Those would have been fighting words, the kind of things people might kill you for saying.

But Christians see the power and wisdom of this powerless foolishness.

For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.

We may not always understand what God is doing in our lives and in the world.

At times it may seem like we are in a position of weakness and that we are defeated.

It is at this point we must remind ourselves of God’s priorities.

As God later told Paul, “**My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness**” (2 Cor. 12:9).

THE SERMON IN A SENTENCE: **Realize it is wise to know that you do not know everything.**

YOU:

**What story do you tell yourself about...well you?**

CLOSE: In a New York Times article titled "**The Stories We Tell Ourselves,**" philosopher **Todd May** notes that we're often telling stories about ourselves—mainly to make ourselves look good.

He writes: "**We tell stories that make us seem adventurous, or funny, or strong.**

**We tell stories that make our lives seem interesting. And we tell these stories not only to others, but also to ourselves."**

May says that most of us "**live in echo chambers that reflect the righteousness of our lives back to us.**"

And in our "**echo chambers**" we justify why we and our group are superior to others.

*In short, we tell ourselves a very narrow, shallow story.*

Followers of Jesus aren't always better people, but we always have a better and bigger story because our story isn't first and foremost about us.

It begins with Jesus. A children's Bible called The Jesus Storybook Bible has a wonderful way of summarizing this story as Jesus tells his followers:

**This is how God will rescue the whole world we. My life will break and God's broken world will mend. My heart will tear apart—and your hearts will heal ... I won't be with you long. You are going to be very sad. But God's Helper will come. And then you'll be filled up with a Forever Happiness that won't ever leave. So don't be afraid. You are my friends and I love you.**

That...is Lenten Wisdom...

*Let's pray for more of this wisdom...*