

## SERMON FOR LENTEN 2008 2<sup>ND</sup> MIDWEEK SERVICE

### “LAMB OF GOD PURE AND HOLY, ONE THE CROSS DID SUFFER”

Grace, peace and mercy be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

“Lamb of God, pure and holy”, is the theme of our Lenten Season this year. This second week of Lent we’re going to zero in on the second line of that hymn, “who on the cross did suffer”.

With the words of our epistle lesson as our text, let’s read together those words of 1 Corinthians 1: 21-25:

**‘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. 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 who 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’.**

I. The Christian Gospel, that is the message ‘Christ crucified’ has a sharp edge to it, like the sword of God’s Word (Heb. 4:12). Which makes it very difficult for many people to swallow, so to speak. In our text Paul describes the Christian Gospel ‘Christ crucified’ as ‘a stumbling block’ to some and ‘foolishness’ to others. But, before we are too quick to condemn others with their perception of the Gospel. For many of us ‘life long’ Christians the Christian Gospel ‘Christ crucified’ can become ‘ho hum’. We’ve heard all this stuff before. It’s almost as if we’ve heard this message so often, it seems perfectly logical to us:

**Almighty God should be nailed to an instrument of torture, a cross, to die helplessly at the hands of His own creatures.** It’s like we’ve been vaccinated with the cross so often we’ve become immune to it’s meaning, it’s impact, ho hum! There are crosses everywhere: on our altar, surrounding our pulpit, around our necks. In my office I have a wall of crosses with the words, ‘Lift high the cross ... the love of Christ proclaim’. I’ve brought some of those decorative crosses with me to day. Crosses, crosses, crosses, ho hum.

Obviously, I’m not preaching against crosses. I don’t want you to quit wearing crosses. But, like the Apostle Paul, I’d like each of us to acknowledge, that all too often we don’t come to grips with the full impact of the meaning of the cross other than as jewelry and ornament. We may not out and out call the cross foolishness or a stumbling block, but we can be very guilty of trivializing the cross.

We’re guilty of being too familiar with the story of ‘Christ crucified’. And as the old clique says ‘familiarity can breed contempt’. After awhile ‘Christ crucified’ can become a soothing mantra like any ‘new age’ spiritual ‘ohm’ lulling us into apathy and complacency. ‘Christ crucified’ with a quick sign of the cross can become a good luck charm, so things go OK in our lives. That’s the foolishness and the stumbling block we are most likely guilty of. We ‘ho hum Christians’ are in desperate need of hearing once again, anew, the foolishness of God’s wisdom.

In ‘The Lamb of God, pure and holy, who on the cross did suffer’ for us!

II. The sinful world we live in has a ‘wisdom’ all it’s own. And the world’s wisdom flies in the face of God’s wisdom. Skeptics are always complaining the Bible, God’s Word, doesn’t make sense. The world expects God to translate highly complex mysteries, such as how God created everything in 6 days or why bad things happen to good people, or how can bread and wine be Jesus’ body and blood, or how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, into something that makes sense to our human logic. But, God doesn’t fit into that box. Not that God opposes human logic and reasoning after all He created human reasoning in the first place. But, God transcends what He has created. God is bigger than human brain power.

**Romans 11 says: ‘Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!**

**How unsearchable His judgements and His paths beyond tracing out. Who has known the mind of God?’**

No one, knows God’s mind. Yet misguided people insist on measuring God by our human standards, by our human yardstick of human reason and logic. But, it won’t work. God is a lot bigger than our puny, pea brains. Just ask Adam and Eve. They bought into the lie that it would be better to know both good and evil instead of only knowing good. They reasoned that the forbidden fruit looked pretty tasty and besides eating it would make human beings wise. After all that is what Satan told them. That’s logical. Rather than sticking with the wisdom of God, who had warned them they would die if they disobeyed His Word. Adam and Eve ate anyway! And they died! And all their descendants after them including you and me die. That’s what human reason and logic and wisdom will get you, a plot in the graveyard.

III. But, God’s wisdom which transcends our logic is different. **Isaiah 55: ‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways’, declares the Lord ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts’.** God’s wisdom leads not to death but to life. In fact, God’s wisdom leads to eternal life. And to accomplish that God was willing to make Himself foolish. God in the man Jesus Christ went on a ‘fools errand’ for us sons of Adam and daughters of Eve. God emptied Himself of all His divine power and glory and majesty and lowered Himself to become a fetus in the womb of a virgin. God emptied Himself so He would be cradled and cuddled and coddled like any human baby. God emptied Himself completely helpless and vulnerable like any human child.

Foolish! Crazy! By any human logic it is foolish and crazy. But, as you know that wasn't the only foolishness of our God. Having emptied Himself of all His divine power, God lowered Himself even lower, all the way to death, nailed to a cross. **Philippians 2 'Your mind should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: who being in very nature God did not consider equality with God something to be grasped (held onto), but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross'**. To be hung on a cross you were considered the scum of the earth. That's quite a long distance, to leave all the majesty and glory of heaven to become the scum of the earth. But, that's the foolish and illogical love God has for us super wise and logical human beings. What kind of weak God would allow Himself to be manhandled and crucified for us? The Greeks called it 'idiotic'. The Jews considered it 'humiliating'. Can we really consider it 'ho hum'?

III. Many people today still don't get it! 'The Lamb of God, pure and holy, who on the cross did suffer', doesn't appeal much to today's church shoppers, to today's seekers. 'OUR GOD IS AN AWESOME GOD', is what people want to sing, because He will give you a happy life if you just turn things over to Him, if you just cooperate with Jesus, if you simply decide to follow Jesus, everything will fall into place. Which sounds logical, but hidden in that worldly though religious wisdom is 'self righteousness'. Jesus as hero sounds right. Jesus as example sounds logical. Jesus as paradigm of self improvement. Seems to be much more attractive in our 'can do' society, than a crucified, bloody, mocked, forsaken, humiliated, tortured, foolish God. But, the very reason the world doesn't get it or we 'ho hum' the message is why we must intentionally keep on preaching Christ crucified. Because precisely through what people logically think is offensive and foolish or ho hum, God is at work to rescue and to save and to call us 'self righteous' sinners out of the death of our own logic into the wisdom of eternal life. 'The Lamb of God, pure and holy, who on the cross did suffer' may not be very trendy. But that's all right. We Christians don't mind being labeled outdated and out of step with the world that is marching to the wrong drummer into hell. We don't care if others reject as foolish and weak the Gospel message of 'Christ crucified'. Because illogically we believe God's Word,

**'the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom,  
and the weakness of Christ is stronger than man's strength'.**

Lent may appear to be a downer in a lot of churches today, not even commemorated anymore. But that's OK! We all need to be taken down a few notches. If you are tempted to logically think your sins are no big deal. Look again at the cross. At the cross the enormity of our sins comes into perfect focus. On the cross God, as your substitute in Jesus Christ, carried the full weight of all the guilt of the entire world. On the cross God made the perfect sacrifice, exchanging our guilt for His righteousness, our shame for His holiness, our filth for His purity. The cross of Jesus is the intersection of God's love with us sinners. The cross is God's decree upon us = forgiven of our human reasoning and logic, forgiven of our thinking it's our decision for Christ, forgiven of our desiring an awesome God with out the suffering God, forgiven of wanting God to be trendy instead of crucified and offensive, forgiven of our 'ho hum' faith in Christ crucified.

When you were baptized. You were signed with a cross 'both upon your forehead + and upon your heart +, marking you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified'. By the power of God's Word within that baptismal water, all that Jesus earned for you was transferred to your eternal account before God. So, illogically and foolishly, through Jesus Christ, God incarnate, you lack absolutely nothing which makes you right with God, right now and forever!

Conclusion So what if some people reject the Gospel 'Christ crucified' because they consider it offensive and foolish and not very trendy. So what if some people consider the preaching of the cross to be weak and ineffective and even 'ho hum'. So what if some people pride themselves and boast of their decision for Christ. We simply 'illogically and foolishly' believe:

**'the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength'.**

Our sins are all gone from God's sight because of 'Christ crucified'!

The power of Satan's temptations and lies are all broken because of 'Christ crucified'!

The fear and tyranny of death and the grave is over and done because of 'Christ crucified'!

Come what may, we preach Christ crucified, the weakness and the foolishness of God!

**BUT, the strength and the wisdom of a saving faith!**

Lamb of God pure and holy, who on the cross did suffer! For us! Amen

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and your minds through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!