**1 Corinthians 2:1-16 February 9, 2020**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning continues on in 1 Corinthians, now going into chapter 2 re-reading these words, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The Super Bowl comes and goes so quickly doesn’t it? I’m sure you can remember the winner, but do you remember the exact score? Do you remember even half of the commercials? Did you even watch it at all? The truth is for two weeks we hear analysis and speculation about the Super Bowl whether we seek it out or not. Experts making predictions on the score and giving their take on who will win. The Super Bowl always brings an abundance of “lofty speech” and “wisdom” from players and coaches, from fans and commentators, in print and on TV and on countless sports talk shows. But, a week after the “Big Game” we can look back at it all for what it was, and it was just a lot of people saying a whole lot about nothing. Because the game settles it all. Gone is the lofty speech when the final result comes. The speculation and predictions were just filling time. We have a winner, we have a loser, we have the concrete truth. Leave the “lofty speech” and the “wisdom” behind.

Last week Paul spoke about the conditions that some put on the Word of God, the “Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom”, but here Paul continues on that by saying he *didn’t* come to them with lofty speech and wisdom. He *didn’t*, in fact, have a lot to say—at least not about a lot of different things. Certainly, he *didn’t* say a lot about nothing.

So here’s what *is* before us in today’s text: Paul’s words are filled with a triple negation—not, no one, nothing—that becomes wonderfully positive. In fact, from this Word of God we will discover and rejoice that nothing means everything.

What do we *want* to see and hear? What do we *need* to see and hear? What do the redeemed people of God need to hear? What does the fallen world need to hear? This is what Paul addresses when he says to the Corinthians in our text: “I decided to know *nothing* among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified”

The Gospel does *not* rest on and is *not* revealed by the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. For Paul did *not* come proclaiming with lofty speech or wisdom.

While Paul didn’t come to the people speaking lofty speech or wisdom it’s still something that we are surrounded by and that we gravitate to in our world today. We live in a world where anyone can be an expert as long as they look and sound the part. We crave and follow those who seem to have wisdom, who seem to have everything figured out in the world around us, when in truth they have disregarded God’s Word and the true fount of wisdom in our world. But they sound good, they look smart, they must be right. We are easily fooled.

It is “*not* a wisdom of this age” through which the Gospel is learned but it is only when God works his revelation, for Paul writes in verse 12 “we have received *not* the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God”

Indeed, Paul’s speech and message “were *not* in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” He could work these demonstrations because the Holy Spirit “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church” we learn that in Luther’s explanation of the Apostles Creed, specifically in the explanation of the 3rd Article which goes into detail about the Holy Spirit. Luther writes these words in a simple way, expounding on Paul’s own words in verse 11 “*no one* comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God”

*“None* of the rulers of this age understood” God’s “secret and hidden wisdom” and, in ignorance, they crucified the Lord of glory. They did not—they could not—understand that God’s wisdom was greater and that it had been in place “before the ages”. They did not understand—and, without the Spirit’s work, neither do we—what God prepared and what the Spirit made known.

Truly, *no one* can grasp God’s eternal plan, from first promise to final fulfillment and future glory. *No one* can grasp how God thinks and, how he acts—that he acts not in judgment and condemnation, but in mercy and grace, in kindness and love. *No one* can discover the Good News of salvation. We try to figure God out, but we fail.

Which is when we make ourselves the experts, when we put ourselves before God’s clear instructions and His Holy Word. When we follow after the lofty speech and wisdom of the world which says to take a break from caring about others, to take a break from reading God’s Word or receiving His Sacrament, and instead focus inward. Worry about you. Take care of you. You have to, you have no other choice, it’s the only way. Desperate times call for desperate measures, and in our weakness and confusion, we seek the wisdom of the world when in truth God is calling out to us to guide us and protect us.

Our struggles can and should turn us from our attempts at spiritual knowledge and insight to looking at the Word. But we continue to look up or look inside—both are theologies of glory—rather than to look down at the written and revealed Scriptures.

Indeed, we know nothing! We can accomplish nothing, we can find no glory in our own efforts. When it comes to what we have accomplished and what we have earned in the sight of God by what we do with our hands the answer is nothing. For the Law remains. The Law which condemns us as sinners, showing us that we have broken the clear commands of God in disobedience, and that we have neglected to do the good that God has called us to. For Jesus himself says in our Gospel lesson. “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” What has changed about the standard of perfection for salvation? Nothing.

But this text reveals the heart of Paul’s missionary efforts. More than that, it reveals the living heart of the Church, of the Church’s life and identity, and of the Church’s mission and proclamation: “For I decided to know *nothing* among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” This is the truth. This is the message. This is the task. This wasn’t just for Paul to get right as he wrote to the Corinthian Christians. This is for the Church of all times and all places.

We have the joy of coming into God’s house to hear the clear message about Jesus Christ but Paul doesn’t tell us to do this just any old way. Instead he says, “I decided to know *nothing* among you except Jesus Christ *and him crucified*.” For the cross must be at the center of our proclamation, because this is how Jesus Christ is made known. And nothing else matters . . .

. . . or else our sin still matters. And guilt still matters. And shame still matters. And separation from God still matters. And instead of an eternal life, we face an eternal death. But because of Jesus’ death, as both our substitute and our sacrifice, now forgiveness matters. Redemption matters. Freedom matters. Restoration matters.

Which is why this truth is something that even the children can learn and understand, and sing and proclaim to the world, just as we were blessed to hear the children last week. Our first hymn is a continuation of the theme of easy to learn songs, this one coming from the Epiphany section. For we sang together this morning “In Him there is no darkness at all, the night and the day are both alike, the Lamb is the light of the city of God, shine in my heart, Lord Jesus” Whether you realize it or not, even in these words we see the cross, for the Lamb, the perfect lamb in whom there is no darkness or sin, is the light of the city of God in that He is taken to the altar, He sheds his blood, and the forgiveness of sins means a dispelling of the darkness, for he is our light and our life and He now shines in our heart as redeemed, restored, children of God.

May God shine in our hearts, as we go forward into the world to reflect the light of the Son of God who died on the cross to save us. And a final thought for you this morning is this. While the Super Bowl is known for the game it of course is also known famously for the commercials. Commercials are of course advertisements that want you to notice and know a lot of different things and different products. Some have a serious tone, some are silly, some are funny, some are sad. Advertisers go about every avenue in order to sell their product or make you take notice of a specific theme and message that they are going for. But the difference between the world and the Church is this: the cross alone—just the one message of Christ crucified—is the never-ending truth that the Church proclaims, that the Christian affirms, and that the Holy Spirit uses to redeem and rescue and restore sinners. While the world preaches a million messages, and a million different avenues of happiness and glory, may we come together and With Paul say: “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.