

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

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.

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

²⁰Where 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?

²¹For 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.

²²For Jews demand signs
and Greeks desire wisdom,

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

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

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

²⁶Consider your own call,
brothers and sisters:
not many of you were wise
by human standards,
not many were powerful,
not many were of noble birth.

²⁷But God chose what is foolish in the world
to shame the wise;
God chose what is weak in the world
to shame the strong;

²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world,
things that are not,
to reduce to nothing
things that are,

²⁹so that no one might boast
in the presence of God.

³⁰He is the source of your life
in Christ Jesus,
who became for us wisdom from God,
and righteousness
and sanctification
and redemption,

³¹in order that,
as it is written,
'Let the one who boasts,
boast in the Lord.'

Matthew 5:1-12

When Jesus saw the crowds,
he went up the mountain;
and after he sat down,
his disciples came to him.

²Then he began to speak,
and taught them, saying:

3 'Blessed are
the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 'Blessed are
those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

5 'Blessed are
the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

6 'Blessed are
those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

7 'Blessed are
the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.

8 'Blessed are
the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

9 'Blessed are
the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

10 'Blessed are those
who are persecuted
for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 'Blessed are you
when people revile you
and persecute you
and utter all kinds of evil
against you
falsely
on my account.

¹²Rejoice
and be glad,
for your reward
is great in heaven,
for in the same way
they persecuted the prophets
who were before you.

Reading the Epistle This Week

This is our third week hearing 1 Corinthians 1:
Introducing, naming division and seeking unity
now characterizing the choice of 'cross'

This is an argument of paradox –
a counter-cultural appeal
contrasting wisdom and foolishness

Paul quotes Isaiah 29:14
challenging conventional wisdom
applying the text to Jesus' cross as alternative

Try jotting two columns, like these:
Those who are perishing. /. us who are being saved
cross is foolishness. /. cross is power of God
wise. /. foolish
Jews seek signs, Greeks wisdom. /. we proclaim Christ crucified
stumbling block to Jews. /. power wisdom of God to Jews
called
foolishness to Greeks. /. power wisdom of God to Greeks called
human wisdom. /. foolishness of God
human strength. /. God's weakness
wise, powerful, noble birth. /. foolish, weak, low despised
in the world. /. those called, in Christ

In 2nd century tradition, Tertullian in North Africa put it:
'What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?'

In 20th century, our tradition reshaped the choices:
reason vs faith
science vs religion

for you, what is 'the message of the cross'?
How is it countercultural?

Reading the Gospel This Week

Welcome to the Sermon on the Mount!
Matthew 5-7 is the core of mid-century UCC piety, eh?
Recall last year's Luke 6 Sermon on the Plain version?

Blessed - like the start of Psalms, '*ashre* in Hebrew,
or *makarios* in Greek,
'happy', or 'congratulations', 'fortunate', or even
'it will be well with' are alternate translations...

That's not quite our cost/benefit, Pascal's Wager choice,
but is framed in terms of Matthew's 'kingdom of heaven',
basileia tōn ouranōn not 'kingdom of God'

in this world, bad things happen to good people...
but in the 'KOH' vision, how does it change?

My old Sunday School summary starts with 7 beatitudes:

1. poor in spirit
2. mourn
3. meek
4. hunger and thirst for righteousness
5. merciful
6. pure in heart
7. peacemakers

Then adds 3 clauses:

8. persecuted for righteousness' sake
9. people revile you, persecute you...
10. in the same way... the prophets

We know the 'eirenic', peaceful experience of events in 1-7
and the character traits or spirituality encouraged,
but the conflict costs in 7-10, and related behaviour?
Righteousness: Hebrew *zedakah*, Greek, *diakusyne*

