

The Mind of Christ in a Post-Truth World
Matthew 5:13–20; 1 Corinthians 2:1–16
Saturday, February 5, 2023

Let us pray: Speak to us, Lord, a word that is good and true and right, that we might have the mind of Christ and live from a place of love in his name. Amen.

Last week we talked about *wisdom*. Wisdom, we said, is the proper use of what we know to be good and right and true. Not just what we *know*, but how we *use* what we know. And Paul said that there are two kinds of wisdom. There is human wisdom and there is the wisdom of God. And he says that where we *see* the wisdom of God is on the cross. Because on the cross, Jesus stands with those who are weak and powerless and suffering and oppressed. And *that* is the wisdom of God – that the blessing of God is for, not those who are powerful and successful and beloved, but for those who are struggling and suffering. The blessing of God is for *them* because they are the ones who need it the most. That seems like *foolishness* to the rest of the world, according to human wisdom, but it is when God works through the poor and the powerless and the oppressed and the suffering that we say, “They could not do that on their own. That is the power of God at work in them.”

So the wisdom of God is that God saves those who cannot save themselves; God helps those who cannot help themselves.

As we continue in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he picks back up on this theme of wisdom. And we’ll get to that in just a moment. But last Sunday, after we were done with worship and the annual meeting and the chili cook off, I went home like a lot of us did to watch the Eagles game. And I noticed something in that game and the game that followed that I have not noticed to this extent in a football game before. The referees made some bad calls in both of those

games. There were a few in the Eagles game, but there were *a lot* in the other game. And what I noticed was the number of people saying that the games were “rigged.” They were saying that all of the bad calls were because the NFL wanted certain teams to win, and so the referees made calls that would benefit those teams.

Now, people always complain about bad calls. “The reason my team didn’t win is because of the referees!” That’s nothing new. But I had never heard *this many* people saying that the whole thing was *rigged*. It was all over social media. And when someone would try to say, “It’s not rigged. There were some bad calls, but they didn’t ultimately determine the outcome of the games,” then the person *saying* it was rigged would say, “That’s because you’re an Eagles fan (or a Chiefs fan)!” To which the Eagles and Chiefs fans would say, “Well, you’re just a sore loser looking for excuses!” No one could talk to anyone else, and no one could listen to reason, because everyone was so firmly entrenched in their belief and certain that they were right.

And while this level of conspiracy theory might be new to football, it is not new to our *culture*. It is indicative of a much larger problem that we have been dealing with. We live in what has been termed a “post-truth” culture in which we can no longer agree on basic facts, everything is a conspiracy, the whole thing is rigged, we don’t know who to trust, we are so firmly entrenched in our beliefs, and the media that we consume only serves to reinforce what we already believe.

Case in point – Several weeks ago, an NFL player named Damar Hamlin actually *died* during a game. He took a very hard hit to the chest at precisely the wrong moment in the cycle of his heartbeat, causing his heart to stop. For nine minutes, he was dead on the field. They resuscitated him, brought him back to life, and he is slowly recovering. Two weeks ago, he came to the Buffalo Bills playoff game to support his team. The TV cameras showed him up in a

box seat. He stood up and waved. But it was so snowy at the game that you could not see his face. So then a *whole lot* of people started saying that he was never actually resuscitated and brought back to life, but that the NFL was using a *body double* to hide the fact that he was actually dead because, they said, what killed him was not actually the hit that he took but the COVID vaccine.

If you look up the definition of “post-truth,” the Cambridge Dictionary says that it relates to a situation in which people are more likely to accept an argument based on their emotions and beliefs than one based on facts. We could be presented with *hard data*, but we are suspicious that the data is serving an agenda, so we don’t believe it. Our political and religious beliefs have become so entangled with our *identities*, with our sense of *who we are*, that if we are presented with something that *challenges* those beliefs or proves them to be wrong, we simply cannot accept that, because that would mean that *I* am wrong, that what I have based my *life* on is wrong, and we cannot bear the thought of that.

So all we do now is *argue* and *fight* to defend our beliefs and our sense of identity. Everything is politicized. Everything is a culture war. There is no room for conversation. Everyone thinks that *I am right* and anyone who thinks differently is either uninformed, stupid, or crazy.

And it is in the midst of all of *that*, that we read Paul’s letter to the Corinthians. The Christians in Corinth have been fighting over theology and the proper way to practice their faith. Many of their arguments centered on what Jesus talks about in our reading from the Sermon on the Mount. “Did Jesus abolish and do away with Jewish law, so that we don’t have to follow it anymore? Or are we still bound by it?” Factions have arisen under certain leaders who said, “*This* is the proper way to live out our faith,” “No, *this* is the proper way to live out our faith.”

The Christians in Corinth had started taking pride in their leaders and in their wisdom and ability to speak in an eloquent, sophisticated way. And they had become so entrenched in their own beliefs, in the teachings of their particular leader and their understanding of what is right, that it was starting to tear apart the church.

So Paul says to *that*, “It’s not about human wisdom. It is about the wisdom of God. I did not come to you proclaiming the mystery of God in lofty words or wisdom. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”

Now, when Paul says that, he is not *denouncing* wisdom and intelligence. He’s not being anti-intellectual. Paul was an *incredibly* intelligent person; highly educated. He is not saying that he wants the Corinthians or us to not use the minds that God gave us. Around the year 400, St. Augustine encouraged Christians to “believe that you may understand.” He believed that faith in God brings with it a constant desire for deeper understanding. And in the 11th century, the theologian Anselm of Canterbury defined theology as “faith seeking understanding.” That faith places us on this lifelong quest to know and understand God and clarify what we believe about God.

Paul is saying something similar here. He is *not* saying, “Ignore the facts, ignore reason, and just believe in Jesus.” He says right after this, “Among the mature (meaning the mature in faith), we *do* speak wisdom.” He is saying that that’s not where faith *begins*. Faith is not rooted in our ability to reason or understand or prove all of this and make sense of it all intellectually. Because it *doesn’t* all make sense intellectually, and you will *never* be able to prove it. He is

saying that our faith does not *depend* on human wisdom but on the power of God. And where we *see* the power of God is in Jesus Christ and him crucified. Faith begins with the simple act of trusting, where we cannot see or understand, that in Jesus Christ, God is *with us* and *for us*.

We do not trust in our *beliefs*. We trust *God*. Beliefs can change as we have new experiences and come to new understanding. But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Our *understanding* of Jesus may change. But the power of God in this world and in our lives does not depend on our *understanding* of Jesus. We do not trust in our beliefs or theology, we trust God who transcends all of that.

Paul is talking about more than just *believing* here. He is talking about how we *live*. “Christ crucified” is not a theology or a belief. It is an *action*. Paul says here, “We don’t need to rely on *our own* minds, because we have the mind of Christ.” What does it *mean* to have the mind of Christ? He talks about that in his letter to the Philippians, where he says, “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.”

Having “the mind of Christ,” knowing “Jesus Christ and him crucified,” is a *way of being* – emptying ourselves, being broken and poured out for others as Christ was for us. Yes, Jesus cares what we *believe*, because belief drives action. But Jesus’ primary concern is *how we live*. He doesn’t want us to get so caught up in what we *think* and *believe* that we neglect to *act*.

Jesus says in this reading from Matthew, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your *good works* and give glory to your Father in heaven.” Notice that Jesus does *not* say, “So that they may hear your *beliefs* and your *theology* and give glory to your Father in heaven.” So many people have substituted “right” theology and beliefs and politics for *good works*, because it is so much easier to *think* about Jesus than it is to actually *follow* him. But faith is not just about believing something with our minds. It is about living in ways that trust God. We do not need to cling to our beliefs or belongings or anything else, because we trust that God is good and will provide what we need to live. We don’t need to argue about right theology or politics with people on the Internet or anywhere else, because righteousness is not about *being* right. It is about *living* in right relationship with God and with each other; living in ways that demonstrate love for God and for our neighbor.

We live in a post-truth culture in which people are constantly fighting about what is true and right. And as followers of Jesus Christ, the best way for us to counter that is by *living* in ways that are true and right. Living in *love*. And love, Paul says, is demonstrated in the ways that we are patient and kind with one another. Not in the ways that we are envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. Not the ways that we insist on our own way, insist that we’re right. Not in being irritable or resentful. Not by rejoicing in wrongdoing, celebrating when someone makes a mistake and throwing it back in their face, but by rejoicing in the truth. Love is demonstrated in the ways that we bear with one another, even when this other person is hard to bear. It is shown in the ways that we believe in one another and hope for one another and stick with one another and endure all things *together*. That is the way that Jesus Christ loves *us*. So let us have the mind of Christ. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.