

February 16, 2014

Epiphany 6

"True Wisdom Comes from the Holy Spirit"

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-13

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ However, as it is written:

"What no eye has seen,

what no ear has heard,

and what no human mind has conceived"

—the things God has prepared for those who love him

—¹⁰ these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.

There are two sources of wisdom in this life. There is the wisdom that rise up in the minds of people and there is the wisdom that comes down to us from God. Bill Nye the science guy will tell you the world came into being by its own and developed on its own through random chance and survival of the fittest. God speaks to you in Bible and says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Human wisdom says a polished rock such as this (hold up rock) took millions of years to be what it is. The Bible says God created these rocks and then further polished them with subsequent storms and glaciers and the great world flood.

How does human wisdom answer the all important question of what will happen to me after I die? It offers the hope that if you are a somewhat decent person you will be rewarded with a better life in the future. Listen to God speak to you and you will hear how his Son came to this earth to rescue you and save you. Little children have the ultimate wisdom when they sing, "Jesus loves me, this I know for the Bible tells me."

In the words that we just read to you the Apostle Paul describes the huge difference that exists between the wisdom that develops among people and the wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit. The Greeks in great cities such as Athens and Corinth loved their philosophers. People still take courses in philosophy that include the study of Greek philosophers such as Aristotle or Plato. They may give you insights into improving your

life and understanding people, but they cannot offer the wisdom that is needed to be saved and have eternal life. That can only come through the Holy Spirit. True wisdom comes from the Holy Spirit.

Human wisdom fails

Paul tells us that human wisdom will fail us. "We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing." The wisdom of this age and the wisdom of the rulers of this age will come to nothing. The wisdom of this age will not be able to help you when it comes to surviving the judgment that is coming on the last day.

You depend on the wisdom of other people to help you with your daily affairs of life but you cannot depend on this wisdom to help you get rid of the problem of sin that will ultimately condemn you when Jesus returns in clouds of glory. There are times when I have to depend on the wisdom of an auto mechanic to repair my car, or a dentist to fix my teeth or a doctor to prescribe the right medication when I get sick. In fact if I want to boil the perfect egg I may even turn to the internet and ask the question, "How can I boil a perfect egg?" This wisdom can help me get along better in life, but it cannot offer me help when it comes to knowing with absolute certainty how I can be saved.

Paul says there is a higher and better wisdom. It is a secret wisdom among the mature that the rulers and wise people of this age don't know about. "No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began." No one was around when God created the world in which we live. It was a secret. But then in his love for us God reveals exactly how our world was made, and how he created us. He tells how sin came into the world through Adam and Eve. That allows us to understand why people are as mean and nasty as they are, and why we have prisons with nasty prisoners, and kids hit each other and bully each other, and moms and dads fight, and why we have bad thoughts in our hearts that someone once said would shame hell itself.

In this amazing book we call the Holy Bible, God comes to us and he whispers in our ear and says, "Let me tell you a secret. Let me tell you how I have a plan to rescue you and save you from the sin that is going to cause you to spend an eternity in hell. I am going to send my Son into the world. He is going to become like you except without sin. He is going to die on the cross and suffer for everything you have done wrong so you can be forgiven. His blood will wash away every sin you ever committed."

Remember when a man came to Jesus by night. His name was Nicodemus. Jesus told him things he had never heard before in his life, or never wanted to hear. He told him the truth about needing to be born again. He shared with him this great secret of God's love that God wants everyone to know because they cannot find this in themselves. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Some of the really smart and wise and intelligent people in this world don't know beans from buckshot about who Jesus is and what he has done to save us. How many of the

really smart people who lead our country can stand up and sing that wonderful little song we learned in Bible camp, "Living, loving, dying, rising, Jesus did it all for me." The Apostle Paul says, "None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." When Jesus told that smart guy named Pontius Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world and that everyone on the side of truth listens to him, Pilate said with great disdain, "What is truth?" Stand up in a college philosophy class and share the secrets of God's wisdom found in the Bible and you will be politely told to keep your thoughts to yourself because such thoughts have no place in such an august and sagacious setting of such worldly wise and smart people.

The human mind has a natural disdain for the wisdom of God. Paul quotes from the prophet Isaiah, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him." In their superior wisdom people prefer to remain clueless when it comes to the truth about sin and its consequences, and clueless when it comes to what God has done to rescue them and save them. There is ignorance and there is willful ignorance. When you try to dig into the gopher's tunnel that is making a mess of your yard, the gopher will push dirt into the place where the tunnel is exposed to the light. The gopher says, "Stay out of my hole." So it is with the human heart and mind that prefers to remain ignorant of what God has prepared for us. It says, "Stay out of my hole. I don't want to hear you talk about my problem of sin. I really don't want you to talk about God's love that sent his Son to rescue me. Let me continue to do it my way."

God's wisdom is superior and it can shock us. Most of you here this morning are familiar with the verse of the Bible that says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." The Greek word for sin has the thought of aiming for a target and falling short or missing the mark. What an eye opener it is to realize missing the mark is not just wildly shooting an arrow in all directions, but failing to hit the bull's eyes again and again. In their superior wisdom people sincerely believe with all their hearts that God will reward them with a good life in the future if they are not as bad as most people and if they try and do their best. The Bible's definition for sin is falling short of God's glory and that means falling short of God's perfection. I desperately need to hear what God tells me in his Word so I can be spared from falling short of his glory.

Did you hear about the bus that scraped into the Santa Maria Bridge this past week? The driver of an Amtrak bus suffered a medical problem and slumped over in his seat. Two women in the front of the bus were able to get the bus to stop and saved the people on board from further harm and danger. I can use the brains God has given me and the wisdom I have accumulated in life to help other people in need or even spare myself from harm and danger, but I have no resources to save myself from the problem of sin that has come into my life. Here I need to depend on the Holy Spirit to show me what my God has done to save me.

God's wisdom saves me

It says here that "But God has revealed it to us by the Holy Spirit." The Holy Spirit reveals to us what God has prepared to rescue us. It says that, "The Spirit searches the deep things of God" and then makes them known to us. We cannot look into the mind of another person to know what they are thinking. We can certainly not know by ourselves what is in the mind of God, especially the deep thoughts of God. We may use our minds to conclude

that the world in which we live was designed by an awesome and powerful God, but we have no knowledge of his deep, deep love for us and his plan to save us unless the Holy Spirit makes this known to us.

The Holy Spirit gives us true wisdom because the Holy Spirit reveals how much God loves and cares about us. "We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us." All the collective wisdom in the world says, "There is no free lunch." Our human minds say, "There must be something I have to add to what Christ has done for me to be sure that I am saved." The Holy Spirit reveals things that our God has freely given us. The Holy Spirit tells us that our God charged us nothing to have his Son come into the world for us and nothing to have Jesus die for all our sins. He even charged us nothing to give us the faith to believe all this is true, even though it sounds too good to be true. Here is what the Holy Spirit reveals to us in Ephesians 2, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast." God reveals to us in his word that we cannot boast by saying, "I accepted Christ into my heart." Everything God gives me is a gift of his love.

As Paul says we are always being taught by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit always expresses spiritual truths in spiritual words. Jesus called the Holy Spirit our Counselor or Comforter. He walks alongside of and says, "Listen to your heavenly Father tell you how you are his dear child through Jesus." Listen to Jesus tell you how much he is your Shepherd who gave his life for you and holds you in his loving arms. The Holy Spirit boldly asserts that nothing in all creation will ever separate you from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus your Lord. True wisdom comes only from the Holy Spirit. Amen.