**1 Corinthians 1:18-31 (ESV)**

**18** For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19** For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” **20**  Where 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? **21** For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. **22** For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, **23** but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, **24** but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. **26** For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. **27** But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; **28** God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, **29** so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. **30** And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, **31** so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

**“Boasting In The Better Savior”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. Here are some various sites known throughout the world. The Pyramids of Egypt. The Coliseums in Rome. The Great Wall of China. The Taj Mahal. The Empire State Building. Stonehenge. Hagia Sophia. The City of Jerusalem. What do all these places have in common? They have found their way at one time or another to be on the list of the seven wonders of the world. Human beings have a fascination over recording and lifting up the grand achievements that standout in life. However, what did you not hear mentioned nor will ever find on such a list? The cross of Jesus Christ. It certainly is a spectacle, but one more of pain and sorrow than some impressive glory worked by the hands of men.

 As the Gospel reading from St. John showed how the Son of God drove out the false views fashioned at the temple in Jerusalem. St. Paul also wrote to the Corinthian Church concerned about their delusions over the wisdom of man. They had become embarrassed or at least weary to the word of the cross. The same happens so easily for us today when there is so much glory all around us. Yet, Lent has a way of stripping off the things that would diminish the Gospel. The suffering and death of God’s Son is the pinnacle celebration for the Church. We even get to the point on Maundy Thursday when the altar will lose its glory. All that remains on Good Friday is the sacrifice of Christ sent for a sinful world. The mercy of God is truly a wonder for the cross of Jesus is the instrument of our salvation.

 There was a certain pride in Roman society with the use of reason. If knowledge is power, they had it militarily, economically, medically, and other ways. For the Corinthian Christians, this meant great pressure and belittlement for the baptized. So long has the cross been in our churches and accepted by our society that we forget how strange it was to people. God sending his Son to die for sinful humanity and all of it by means of the worse death possible? Unheard of, ridiculous, just plain horrendous. St. Paul made known the problem, “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” To make reason master over God’s Word and the Holy Spirit meant a person put themself outside of Christ. The power of knowledge, is not the same as the power of God knowing how to save sinners by His grace given in the cross.

 It is a wonder that God silences the reason of man the same way still today. After the decimation of 9/11 there was no reasonable answer, but someone was smart enough to construct a cross on top of the rubble. In contrast, the movement going on to force religious organizations to adopt contraceptives. Is a part of a healthcare mandate that opposes the cross caring little of life or death. Yet, St. Paul tells us what God does to reason when it attempts to be master. He quotes the prophet Isaiah, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” It is utter foolishness to imagine man’s reasoning and goals supreme, as if God has not repeatedly swept them away. Proverbs states, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death (14:12).” God strips away man’s glory in order to save us with another glory given to sinners. His mercy is truly a wonder for the cross of Jesus is the instrument of our salvation.

 Those baptized in Corinth were to know God did not save arbitrarily or without cause. No, there was a reason the Gospel came in such humility. St. Paul declared, “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.” The consistent act throughout the ages of man is the preached Word. Since the time of Adam and Eve, this way of foolishness is what pleases God. It was to repent of sinful reasoning and believe in the forgiveness proclaimed by God. Even the Law established at Mt. Sinai before Israel came with a promising love from God preached to unworthy people. He said, “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” When the Jews wanted a sign for Jesus purging the temple. He preached the sign of His cross saying, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” It was by that instrument of death where God gave the reason of why He loves preaching. The foolishness was in His Word destined to give nothing less than faith in God’s saving work for sinners.

 So long as reason remains king, humanity will never be captive to a better faith in Christ as Savior. The Son of God boasts before His Father at what makes sinful reason mad and frustrated beyond belief. He says, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children”

(Matt 11:25). This is what makes infant baptism a blessing. God preaches the Gospel to a child before learning the things of this world. The reason of man becomes captive to faith in Christ as Savior. Even now, my reason must continually return to repent and believe the redeeming work of God for me. There is a consistency, a reason for God drawing us back to Jesus. St. Paul said, “we preach Christ crucified…” The Word is a sermon meant to save, but the sacraments are visible sermons of God’s love for you. Among the baptized a glorious Word goes out to the ends of the earth, “Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

 What is shameful to those glorifying self-image. God uses to save the most unimaginable sinners. What is ridiculous in suffering and death to the way man reasons. God gives His reason to save sinner by faith in Him. The early church father Chrysostom proclaimed, “The Gospel produces the exact opposite of what people want and expect, but it is that very fact which persuades them to accept it in the end” (ACC notes). The mercy of God is truly a wonder for the cross of Jesus is the instrument of our salvation. If the world wants to have 7 wonders, we only need one crucified Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. St. Paul lifts up our hearts and minds by stating, “For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” As much as man wants to rely on reason, without faith in Christ it will run off and even betray itself by sin, death, and the Devil. However, where reason can be captive and serve in faith to Christ, then the Word brings forgiveness, new ways of life, and a redemption to boast in nothing else but the Lord of the cross. Amen. Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ to life everlasting, Amen.