

“Leaving Folly Behind”

03-08-15

What does Folly mean? Webster says, *“lack of good sense; foolishness”*. In preparing for today’s sermon, I came across a Bible passage that describes many people very well when we think about folly. Psalm 14:1 says, *“The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”* We church people get pretty upset by people who think like this. We don’t understand how people could live like this. The sad thing is that there’s been a new surge of atheism in recent years.

But I have a question, don’t you have atheist-like moments when you might not trust the power of the cross of Jesus Christ because of what’s happened to you or around you? Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:18, *“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.”*

As we walk by faith in Jesus Christ, we’re not the ones who are perishing. For that, we need to thank Jesus each and every day! He came to earth to suffer and die for our sins, not His, and His resurrection shows His ultimate power! That’s how we need to observe Lent, by hanging onto His cross for dear life!

I know for myself, there are times when I forget Him. There are also times when I imagine that I’ve got to do it on my own, but I need to remember Jesus did it all. 2 Timothy 1:12, *“But I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that Day what has been entrusted to me.”*

Do you have times when the stresses of life, the press of work, or your physical or emotional suffering, have you temporarily forget what Jesus has done for you? There’s a simple explanation and it’s deep down in your heart and mine. We’re born in sin!

Sin doesn’t simply mean we’re born to make mistakes. It means we’re born as rebels against God. It’s our sinful nature. Baptism covers over that original sin. Baptism is a washing of regeneration, a new birth. All that comes from the cross of Jesus. However, sin still waits in our hearts. Rebelliousness against God is still down there.

Sin clings to us, and wants to show its power. It wants us to seek proof. It wants us to seek signs and wonders. Because of sin, we sometimes live by sight and not by faith! That’s the terrible urge down in our hearts. That’s why we sometimes act like a fool. Listen to 2 Corinthians 5:6–7, *“So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.”*

Deep down in our hearts, deeper than our thoughts can take us, is our sinful will wanting power. It has the desire to have things explained so we can sit in judgment. This deep down rebelliousness comes up every day! We want control! Today God says to us, *“No! The weakness of the cross is the right way.”*

It's God's way, not our way! So let's leave our natural folly behind and realize again that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. That weakness is on the cross, hanging limp to help us, dying so that we might live. Jesus is the weakness of God and the strength of God.

In all of this, the devil is a problem! You can be sure that the devil's trying to undermine what we're doing in faith. How do we know that the weakness of the cross is in fact the power of God? Because we've got the story right here in the Bible. Listen to Romans 15:4, *"For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."*

In today's Old Testament lesson we heard the Ten Commandments. Remember those? *"You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. You shall honor your father and your mother. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet."*

One of the most important things about the Ten Commandments is what precedes them. Listen to Exodus 20:2, *"I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."* God's saying here, *"I brought you out. I am your Savior. I am your Redeemer. The ways of the world are not. The ways of the Egyptians make you slaves. The ways of the world make you slaves."*

Listen to Galatians 5:1, *"For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery"*.

Open to 1 Corinthians 1. We know that the cross is the power of God, because we've seen the story of God's power played out in our own lives. Paul reminded the Corinthians and us in verses 26-29, *"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. 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; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God."*

That's not a bad description of you, me, and our congregation. All the spiritual treasures we hold in our hearts and celebrate Sunday after Sunday, they're not our doing. They're from God, and He pours out His goodness to us sinners from the cross of Jesus Christ. The giving of His body and blood to renew us and this shows how much God loves us and calls us His own.

So let's leave folly behind and see the power of God in the cross of Jesus Christ!