



St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Ash Wednesday, February 17, 2010
1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Christ the Wisdom and Power of God

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified; a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

A man named Caspar – Caspar Badrutt – was an entrepreneur in Switzerland. He thought he could make money renting rooms – selling food and drink and activities. He found during the winter – he could rent delivery boys' sleds for recreation – to adventurous English guests. The problem was – the sleds came speeding down the lanes and alleys of St. Moritz – and crashed into pedestrians! This had two *positive* outcomes. Caspar found a way for people to steer their sleds – *luge* – feet first lying on your back – and the *skeleton* – head first – lying on your tummy. It also led to having tracks – the half-pipe where you would really whip! But who would think you could go so fast there would be the force of 7 G's when you go around the corner? Who would think you could average speeds from 72.5 to 99.5 mph? Who would think you could be going so fast – that if you made a mistake – it could cost you your life? But that's exactly what happened – during practice – the second to the last of 16 curves. *Nodar* – from Soviet Georgia lost control of his very small luge. He went flying off the track. He hit his head on an unpadded metal pole. And he died at the hospital. No one thought an athlete in such superb physical condition – just 21 years old – would make a very technical mistake and pay for that mistake with his life! It was called an *extremely exceptional and tragic accident!* We make mistakes all the time. Again and again we sin. **The wages of sin is death. The gift of God – eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.** This lenten season – our theme for the next 6 weeks will be **We Preach Christ Crucified.** Today – this *Ash Wednesday* we will see:

Jesus Is The Wisdom and Power of God

- 1. God's foolishness is wiser**
- 2. God's weakness is stronger**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on is part of the Apostle Paul's first letter to the believers in the Greek city of Corinth. We read from first and second Corinthians Sunday after Sunday during Epiphany. Do you remember? We are all part of the body of Christ! We are God's gifted people – different gifts and abilities in different amounts and different

combinations at different times in our life – for the common good – to build up and benefit our neighbor – and to give all glory to Jesus! Remember – love is patient, love is kind. It is not proud. It is not rude. It is not self seeking. It is not easily angered! It keep no record of wrongs. It doesn't keep track of and remember the painful hurtful things that others might have done to us. We forgive them. We forget them. We by the power of the Gospel – forgive like Jesus has forgiven us! Forgive like Jesus forgave you – completely – from the heart!

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: ¹⁸**For the message of the cross is foolishness 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; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."** ²⁰**Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?** Let me get this straight. Some 6,000 years ago – there were two people living in a garden called *Eden*? The man was named Adam and the woman was named Eve. He was made out of soil – and she was made out of one of his ribs. This snake slithers into the garden and says they should eat some kind of forbidden fruit from a tree in the middle of the garden – because it's the only thing God said *not* to do. They take a bite – and now everything is ruined! Now there is war and cancer and heart attacks and strokes and Alzheimer's and rape and murder and unspeakable perversion. Jump ahead some 4,000 years – give or take – and a lady who never had *hugs and kisses* – has a little baby boy in her tummy. They name him Jesus. He was a carpenter for about 30 years – then became a traveling preacher and teacher for about 3 years. He worked miracles – healing the sick – turning water into wine – calming the storm – raising the dead. Then he was betrayed by Judas Iscariot – denied by Simon Peter – crucified under Pontius Pilate on a Friday afternoon. He was buried in a tomb with a stone rolled in front of the door. Come first light of Sunday morning he was alive again. Forty days later he went back up into heaven. Believe in him – and all your sins – all your mistakes are forgiven and you get to spend an eternity in a place of joy and peace and happiness that words cannot express. Don't believe in him and you burn up forever in endless torment in Hell. That's what you are telling me? It's all in the Bible? Jesus is the only way to Heaven? That's what you are telling me? In a nutshell – that's pretty much it! Yes! Well, some people say – that's the dumbest thing I ever heard! That's just silly! I heard all that when I was little – in Sunday School! You still believe it? Yes I do – because it's the truth! Well – some people say – that's just stupid! There are 19 major world religions – each claiming to be the truth. These 19 major world religions can be divided into at least 270 major groups. There are some 34,000 Christian groups in the world. Half of these are individual independent congregations – with absolutely no desire to join any group much less denomination. Each one thinks that they – and they alone – have it right! What is a person supposed to do? How are you supposed to know? Read your Bible. Read the Scriptures. Search God's Word – the Old Testament and the New – and you will know the truth. Read God's Word and you will know the truth – and that truth will set you eternally free. Know that all the religions of the world can very simply be divided into two groups. The countless groups that ultimately say you have to save yourself by doing something. And the truth of the Gospel that you are saved by grace – through faith – for Jesus' sake. The truth that Jesus did it all for you.

Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? It's pretty hard to miss the fact that the Olympics are going on in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. One of the events in the Winter Olympics is a race on snowboards – little baby surfboards. One of the competitors for the US is a woman named Lindsey. If you look on the Internet – you can watch a video from the last winter Olympics. Lindsey is winning the race – the final race – for the gold. She is way out in front – way out in front. How far out front? 100 yards – a football field ahead! She can't

possibly lose! Or *can* she? She makes a hotdog – a showboat – a show off move! Hey, look at me! She bends down – and grabs hold of her little surfboard. And when she lands – she crashes – goes sailing off the course – out of bounds – back on to the course! But not before the woman from Switzerland sails across the finish line first! Ouch! Oh, the world says – *show off!* Hold the football out in front – stop running – walk across the goal line. Look at me! Look at me! And again and again – when you show off. When you try and hog the glory all for yourself – you fail miserably. This year was supposed to be her *redemption!* The *world's idea of redemption* – to pay for your mistake – to undo what you did wrong – by doing it right this time. That's what this world calls redemption – to do the right thing to make up for – to balance out the bad. Well Lindsey didn't win this time – so she does the same hotdog move *again?* Sports can be a wonderful opportunity – the teachable moment – of sportsmanship and humility and teamwork and respect. And they can be the teachable moment of what is not! Redemption is not our atoning for sins and mistakes – it's Jesus' sacrifice in our place – to save us from all our sins!

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified; a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. We live in a world that is all impressed with power – political power of big government. Sometimes the LORD steps in to reminds us that all power and all glory belongs to him and him along. That he may *seem* to tolerate many things. But being ignored is again – not one of them. Recently our government came to a grinding halt – not once but twice – for days at a time – in less than a week because of snow. Think about it. A snowflake is so small – so seemingly insignificant – the smallest child can catch a snowflake on their tongue and in the blink of an eye – it will melt. A single snowflake is so small – it can catch on the eyelash of the smallest child – and sit there. And yet – when he decides – when he determines – the Maker of Heaven and earth can make it snow – so hard and so fast and for so long – that those tiny little flakes pile up – deeper and deeper – so that our government – made up of so many people who think they are in charge – cannot even get to their offices all lined with oak and walnut and mahogany and hickory bookshelves – filled with the books and the awards and the plaques and the pictures of all that people claim credit and glory for. All those self-important people stopped by snow flakes – all soft and fluffy and delicate. While the east coast is brought to its knees – planes grounded and self-important business travelers stranded – meanwhile – where the Winter Olympics are being held – they are trucking in – hauling truckloads of snow – so people can cover the mountains – to win gold and silver and bronze medals – that end up where? In safety deposit boxes locked away in bank vaults. Gold and silver and bronze medals that are literally in freezer bags – stashed – hidden behind pizzas and bags of frozen sweet corn niblets and brocolli and sprouts from Brussels! Olympic medals in shoeboxes hiding with the dust bunnies under beds because people are afraid they will be stolen! The Apostle Paul was not exaggerating when he wrote to the retired Roman soldiers there about fast fading earthly glory – and the forever glory of Christ crucified and risen. Paul said: **“What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them *rubbish*, that I may gain Christ.”** Philippians 3:8

We preach Christ crucified and risen! I love movies. They can be wonderful escape for your mind – in a world full of heart ache and painful reality. For an hour and a half or longer – you can be a million miles away – *in a world where...* as the man with the million dollar voice used to say in countless movie trailers. When I first started to go to the movies when I was in

high school and college – we would watch Siskel and Ebert movie reviews. The original *two thumbs up* guys. Well Mr. Siskel passed away a long time ago. And now I found out Roger Ebert – although still communicating – has lost the ability to speak! Mr. Ebert got cancer in his jaw. First they removed his thyroid – then his salivary glands and then his jaw. After that – there were complications – to the point that they made an incision in his windpipe so he can breathe – but now he cannot talk. Still – it says – he communicates. He uses pen and paper. He has a text-to-speech computer. He has a kind of rudimentary sign language – and sometimes he draws letters with his finger on the palm of his hand. I can appreciate that! I have dreams – literally – I have dreams about what it would be like if I couldn't talk. If something happened to my throat or my mouth. When Jesus' love – when the Gospel is in your heart – it just has to come out! If you had to use one of those *text to sound* computers – if you had to write it on marker boards and hold them up – if you had to write letters with your finger on the palm of your hand – you would do that and more – to share Christ crucified and risen from the dead. Because – in the end – that's all that matters – this Lenten Season – today and forever. Christ crucified and risen – will matter into eternity! Amen!

To God alone all glory!



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