

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church  
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz  
Sunt 3 1 Corinthians 1:22-25 March 15, 2009

**Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified; a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to 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:

I was to the doctor the other day. They have you step on the scale. Slip your shoes off – no wallet – no keys – that's a good five pounds right there. They take you in a little room and take your blood pressure. They ask you if you have any problems. Then they have you wait with a little clump of people watching a movie – flat screen – high def – where the deer and the bears and the bunnies and the ducks are giving the hunters a terrible time. Then they call your name. It's back to this big brown chair with really wide arms. Which is your good arm? The left one. They tie this rubber strap around your bicep. They thump you – flick you – a couple of times. Then they say, "Poke" and they stick you with this really sharp needle! Do you watch? In a moment – a little tube begins to fill. They cap it and fill a couple more. From those little tubes they can tell if you have been enjoying *concentrated sweets* during the last three months put together. They aren't fooled if you have only been careful – say the last day or two. They can tell if you have vitamin D – if you have been out in the sun or drinking OJ with vitamin D. They can tell if you have been eating oat meal for breakfast – or if you have been eating greasy burgers and fries! They can tell all kinds of things about you from some very small drops of your blood. So far – my blood work came back very good. But my blood is far from perfect. My blood is fatally flawed because I am. I am flawed through and through and my blood is only part of the proof. The blood of a Carpenter from Nazareth is the only blood in the last 2,000 years that wasn't thoroughly corrupted from sin. That Carpenter was born without inherited sin. And he never ever did anything wrong. That's why you are here today. To hear about the Carpenter – who took responsibility for all my sins and all your mistakes. The Carpenter who is the Son of God and the Redeemer of all people! Today God's Word comforts us:

*We Preach Christ Crucified*

1. Understand the *foolishness* of God
2. Understand the *weakness* of God

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. Corinth – you remember was a big city – perhaps as many as 10 times as many people as Watertown – a quarter of a million people. Corinth was full of people from around the world – there to buy and sell and trade – to make money – lots of it. Two thousand years ago – people were trying to stimulate the economy. The more money you had – the bigger house you could afford! The more money you had – the nicer clothes you could buy your children – the nicer *chariot* you could drive. You could afford to eat out. You could buy nicer furniture – enjoy fine wine. Why – in Corinth – if you had money – you could afford

to go to the Temple of Aphrodite – where they had no less than 1,000 sacred prostitutes – where you could have very nice “hugs and kisses” and chalk it all up to being very religious. The Apostle Paul spent a year and a half – longer in that one place than any other – except for Ephesus. At Corinth Paul was not physically persecuted – physically hurt and harmed like he had been in places like Philippi and Thessalonica and Berea. The dangers in Corinth weren’t physical. They were perhaps even more deadly. The dangers were spiritual!

Paul begins 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians with thanksgiving! Already here is a powerful practical encouragement – thanksgiving! **I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus...Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end.** Spiritual gifts – fruits of the Spirit – like **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control.** These are the spiritual gifts that we cultivate. These are the fruits of faith that will be a part of our life, our marriage, our family, our studies at school – our work where we are employed. These are the fruits of faith that will be obvious as we are salt and light in this spoiled, infected and dark world. Fruits of faith will mean that we are different from people in this world. Imagine the difference! Jesus said on the night he was betrayed, **“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”** John 13:34, 35 Love the way Jesus loves and forgives you – unconditionally – from the heart! Forgive your spouse – the little idiosyncrasies that the devil says are painfully irritating! Forgive your in-laws – their political and economic opinions that they insist on sharing with you. Forgive your co-workers all the times they say and do things that they do over and over again and again – because it’s hardwired into their thinking and behavior. Show the joy that you have from an inheritance stored up in heaven – that has nothing to do with the Stock Market and our 401-k or the world economy. Show that joy – colored with genuine concern – and very practical help for people you know in need. And you will

**Jews demand miraculous signs...** Jewish people back in Bible times – back in the days of Jesus – wanted proof. If Jesus was going to go around telling people **your sins are forgiven** – they wanted to know where he thought he got the authority to do that? They wanted to see some miraculous sign from God – to prove he had authority on earth to forgive sins! Jesus did countless miracles. Matthew chapter 4 says **News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures and the paralyzed, and he healed them.** Matthew 4:24 Again – Matthew chapter 8 – when Jesus was in Capernaum – by Simon Peter’s mother-in-law. **When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.”** Matthew 8:16,17 Remember – when John the Baptist was in prison – remember what Jesus said? **Go back and report to John what you hear and see; The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.** Matthew 11:4f Yet, when Jesus was on trial before wicked King Herod – who said he had been wanting to see Jesus for a long time – because he wanted to see him do some miracle – though Herod asked Jesus many questions he didn’t answer him – and he didn’t do any miracles either. Jesus was not a magician on America’s Got Talent. Jesus wasn’t going to make a dove appear or a pretty assistant vanish or float. Jesus wasn’t going to make a jet plane disappear and he wasn’t going to perform some slight of hand – or some Houdini like escape. He could. When the mob came to

Gethsemane to capture him with swords and clubs – he asked them whom they wanted. Jesus of Nazareth they said. I am he – he replied – and they were all knocked backward. Jesus healed Malchus' ear – when it was cut off with a sword – but nobody seemed to notice – Jesus was always in charge! He just didn't make disciples by means of miraculous signs. He made disciples by the means of grace – by means of law and gospel – the power of his Word – the water of baptism and unleavened bread and grape wine. Jesus never did things the way people do. He did things God's Way.

**Greeks look for wisdom...** There can be no doubt – God blessed people in ancient Greece with minds and intellect the likes of which the rest of the world has seldom seen anywhere since in the world! Examples multiply. Euclid – who discovered so many of the truths of geometry – formulas about angles – that have so much to do with architecture – buildings and bridges – and physics – the exploration of space – rockets and planets and their orbits. Eudoxus – used the method of exhaustion – which prefigured the concept of the limit to calculate areas and volumes while Archimedes invented heuristics which resemble integral calculus. If you can understand a fraction of what they knew – you would be wise indeed. Study medicine – become a physician or a surgeon – and you have to know about Hippocrates! "Do no harm!" How this screams against abortion and physician assisted suicide and embryonic – *embryonic* stem cell research. The destruction of human life – by people who are supposed to preserve and defend it – is sinful because the Lord of Life says so.

**But we preach Christ crucified; a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.** The Gospel of sins forgiven for Jesus' sake is an object of scorn and ridicule for many people today. That's why they organize in groups that work for freedom from religion. They mock our saving faith – make posters that say *adults who have imaginary friends are stupid*. They find Christians who make all the same mistakes as unbelievers. They find Christians who are guilty of drinking too much alcohol, eating too much food, lying, cheating and stealing. They find Christians who are guilty of committing adultery, of abusing prescription drugs, of gossiping, of neglecting their spouse and children or verbally abusing their spouse and children or literally physically punching, hitting and slapping their family members. They say all Christians are hypocrites – who talk smart on Sunday morning – then on Monday morning they do all the things they condemn just the morning before. The fact is – we do make mistakes – all the time. The difference is – we confess these sins and failures – without excuses – to Jesus and to each other. The difference is – we recognize the terrible struggle that goes on in our hearts and minds and lives all the time. Together with the Apostle Paul we admit – **I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do – this I keep on doing...What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God – through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:18f**

**For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.** Man's wisdom is forever changing. Once upon a time everyone knew the earth was as flat as a pancake. To say otherwise would have been considered just plain stupid. Once upon a time everyone knew that the earth was the center of everything. It just had to be. After all, God's Word made it clear that people were the most important thing God made – so surely they would be in the middle of everything! Once upon a time – everyone knew that if you wanted to be safe – you needed to put lots and lots of asbestos in buildings – like schools – so they wouldn't ever catch fire and burn down – and people would be hurt. When I was little everyone knew you needed a really stiff toothbrush. Then they said you need a really soft gentle one. Then they said what you need is one that goes around and around – or

maybe one with little plastic pieces to knock all that plaque loose. People used to brush their teeth with baking soda – then tooth paste – and now back to toothpaste that’s mostly baking soda. Just the other night – they said – baby shampoo – no more tears because it’s so gentle may contain formaldehyde – which could cause cancer? But don’t worry – they said – if that’s what you used in the past – because it’s too late to undo that now! Again how eternally precious to know that the way to heaven hasn’t changed since the Garden of Eden. We are saved by grace through faith – in the Gospel promises of God – faith in the Gospel promises of God!

**For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.** There is a mountain called Alyeska in Alaska – Alyeska, Alaska that is almost 4,000 feet high. There are parts of the mountain that you can ski on – and parts that are off limits. The off limits parts are roped off and well marked with all sorts of huge signs that you can’t miss. You can – however – ski under the ropes and around the signs – simply ignore them – and ski where it isn’t safe. A young man – just 19 years old – did that the other day – and skied smack into a tree. The tree won – his left leg lost. Rescuing this injured skier wasn’t as simple as having two big guys – one on each side of him – walking him down the mountain – while he kept his left leg bent – and didn’t put any weight on it. It took 13 highly trained ski patrollers to rescue one injured guy. And so they are going to send him a bill – for \$845. And they have told him – you can’t ski on our mountain for one year – banned for 364 days! We are where we don’t belong all the time. That’s why we pray – forgive us our trespasses – as we forgive those who trespass against us! We trespass – sometimes with our feet – sometimes with our hands – sometimes with our eyes – sometimes with our tongues – and sometimes with our minds and our hearts – going where it is clearly marked out of bounds. We go there anyway! There was only One who could rescue us. He didn’t risk his life – he gave up his life – to save us! Dying on the cross for wretched sinners like us – makes no sense at all. It is utter foolishness! It’s amazing – that God would save sinners like us. But he did. And what does God want from us? He doesn’t want \$845. He wants you! He wants every part of you – every part of your heart and every moment of your life. He wants all of you – not just here and now – but beside him in Heaven forever and ever. Amen!

**To God alone all glory!**

*Rev. Anthony E. Schultz*