

Intro:

If you're just joining us, this is a series through the Bible book of I Corinthians. We're calling it "Church: are you serious?" because the book of 1 Corinthians was written to a church- a group of Jesus followers- in Corinth. They were doing some outrageous things, things that would make you say "church, are you serious" with some disgust. But from their experience, and this letter written to them, we can learn a lot that might make us respond to the idea of church and Jesus with some seriousness, with dedication. That's our prayer.

Now, last week we talked about a pretty crucial issue for all of us, the issue of divisiveness based on PSP (personality and style preferences). Be sure to check out the notes, because there are some important background details you'll need. The Corinthians were getting pretty caustic toward each other, and it was because they lost their focus on Jesus and got caught up focusing on each other, devolving into childish egoism that was all about who was better than who in the context of their spirituality, creating a dangerous divisiveness.

We noted that the fundamental solution to this sort of divisiveness was and is to change our mind, to have a paradigm shift, to look at the world differently, specifically in a more Jesus centered versus a self or human centered way. This week, our passage continues the conversation (remember this section covers four chapters, and so we're breaking it apart bit by bit), taking us deeper into this paradigm shift. Specifically, the question at hand our passage is trying to answer is "why should we not be divisive and egotistical?" Or, to put it more positively- "What are the things we need to realize, how must our paradigm shift, in order to become the humble, loving people Jesus calls us to be?" Let's take a look, and we'll draw out three points together.

Read Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5.

A lot of questions, I'm sure, from this reading. Let's focus and walk through this complex passage to get some clarity. We'll have some time for Q and A as we go through this.

Why is it we cannot be stuck up about ourselves, divisive toward each other? How must our paradigm shift in order to become the humble, loving people Jesus calls us to be? Three realities to embrace:

The core our spirituality- Jesus on a Cross. It is inherently humbling.

This is the point of the first paragraph. It begins by stating this: v. 18.

Real quick: The word/message of the cross is that God, supposed ruler of the world, came to rule and destroy evil not by exerting force, but by getting killed in the most humiliating and shameful way possible, by dying on a cross. This was what Jesus was set on (Mark 8:27ff, 10:45). And this is where we find life. This upside down, seemingly contradictory message, is the message of the cross.

But why is it this way? V. 19-20 explain- note the "for" in v. 19- that God has set it up this way.

But why (again, note the "for since")? (v.21) Two reasons:

a) Because the world's wisdom says "no" to the need for God. (note v.21a)

- Note: wisdom here does not mean intellect, and folly does not mean stupidity. It's not like, when talking about foolishness, that God or the cross is illogical (like 2+2=5). That's not what is meant. God is not against intelligence. He's not even against wisdom- the Bible has books devoted to gaining wisdom, and even Paul in the next section affirms the need for wisdom. The sort of wisdom talked about here, however, is problematic. Not because it suffers not from an intellectual problem; it suffers from an ego problem, It's the sort of thinking that deliberately puts God out- it doesn't want to know Him (v.21a) or trust Him (v.19, in reference to Isa. 29:14 and context) God, as God over all, has no interest in this sort of wisdom that says no to him.

But God has set it up this way also because...

b) Because the message of the cross gives us what we actually need in life (v.21b-24).

Note in v.21b, it says that God was pleased through this folly of what was preached to save those who believe. What is he talking about? Well, salvation is about what we ultimately need and want in life, in particular to obtain something better than our current condition. And the passage elaborates on this- note the "for" in v.22.

Jews seek for signs- For their salvation, they were looking specifically for a sign of deliverance, one where God would radically come in power, justice and righteousness to deliver them. Greeks look for wisdom- for their salvation- remember from last week, were about finding tools to get ahead socially. Wisdom, especially its expression in good public speaking, was a thing to obtain for social standing.

But the message preached is the cross:

It is seemingly powerlessness,- it is not a sign of strength, but of someone cursed. (Deut. 21:23) It is weakness, folly- it doesn't help us get ahead.

But this is actually what we need- it gives us Jesus! v.24b. And this is what we need because Jesus is the power of God and wisdom of God. Power means ability- ability for living life as intended. Wisdom- what really helps us get ahead. Through what seems like folly, God gives what is ultimately needed for us.

Summary: God's ways are greater than ours (v.25). The core of our spirituality is inherently humbling; we cannot be stuck up about ourselves!

Implications for us:

Is Jesus dying on a cross a core component of your spirituality? Is it at the center of your paradigm for life? We tend to run from what would make us seem weak and powerless. Whether we're just starting the faith journey and the challenge is to admit our ego and sin, or whether we've been in the faith journey for a while and the challenge is to not be divisive, we don't like weakness. But this is where we receive the power and wisdom of God.

****Rhett's Testimony****

How must our paradigm change in order to be the humble, loving people Jesus calls us to? Embrace the core of our spirituality- Jesus on a cross. The second embrace:

Our human status before God (v.26-31).

This is what the second paragraph is about. Two things to note:

- a) Not all were like this- "not many" means that some indeed were. And that is the case today. I'll talk more about this.
- b) Remember that many of the citizens of Corinth were freedmen- low rung Roman citizen's whose social status were just above the slaves. Paul's point, though is simple: Christ make us something (v.30). And he does it so none of us can boast in ourselves, but only in God (v.29, 31).

Implications:

Many of us are not of the same social standing as the crowd here. We are of the upper echelons of the world in our standing, whether it is because of our education, our social clout, our background. There's nothing wrong with this- in fact, God's work cannot move forward if you don't utilize your power, money, influence for Him. This was the case in Corinth (Crispus-a founding member of the church- was probably wealthy based on the evidence we have, Acts 18:8). Even in Jesus' time His work was supported by people who had money (Luke 8:3)

What do we do if we're of this stock? Two things:

- 1) We must realize that God works in a unique and powerful way in and through our brothers and sisters, and that we will be spiritually lacking if we do not have real fellowship with them. What this means is that, for us as a church, we need to do a better job forming friendships in our community who have less- they are there. And we need to do a better job with others brothers and sisters in the world who have less.
- 2) We need to realize that, when compared to God, we are nothing. This verse still applies to us!

If we are of this background- be encouraged- God has made you significant, and he plans to use you to display his glory.

How must our paradigm change in order to be the humble, loving people Jesus calls us to? Embrace the core of our spirituality- Jesus on a cross. Embrace our human status before God. Finally:

God's power beyond human abilities (2:1-5). Our faith rests in this.

God's power via Holy Spirit came on them in Paul's preaching, and they believed in God as a result. It wasn't the nice or eloquent words that convinced them. It was God at work.

Now the point is not that human ability doesn't matter- that we should make it a point to develop the things God has given us, or to work hard. Paul was blessed by God to have great ability, and he worked hard with all He had (1 Cor. 15:10). But the issue is one of our paradigm: who is it we ultimately rely on?

I hope we've been in that place before where God has showed up, above and beyond our ability. I know it happens here. Often, when I feel like I've done a terrible job speaking; that's when people tell me wow. And when I feel like I totally did well, I get very few compliments. That's God at work, specifically humbling me that I might not boast and get puffed up; that I might be the humble and loving Jesus follower.

Implications:

Do we have this perspective?

Do you believe in God's power today with your abilities? Not that we would just be passive and lazy with the abilities that God has given. what's your paradigm? Do you believe he can work beyond you and your ability, that people might see something different at work in you, that they might see God? I challenge us to pray for God's power to show up in our workplaces and relationships, when we're sitting in front of our work computers and examining patients.

How about our church? Do you believe in the power of God today for our church? Do you desperately cry out for more of Him here?

How might we becoming the humble, loving people God calls us to? Three truths to embrace: 1) Jesus on a cross, 2) our humanness, 3) the reality of God's power beyond our ability.

Conclusion:

Have you been puffed up with yourself? Have you been looking down on others, judging people based on PSP? Come to Him.