

We bow our hearts in prayer: Dear heavenly Father, put Christ before us as our crucified and risen Savior, Your power and Your wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. Amen.

... We read as follows in Jesus' name:

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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. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

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. And because of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (ESV)

*This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen.* (John 17:17)

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Dear fellow redeemed,

If we boil down what St. Paul says in our text, it can be easily condensed it into 2 types of theology: the theology of glory and the theology of the cross.

The theology of glory is false, evil, vain and lacks comfort, security, and God's grace.

The theology of glory finds its comfort in the attainment of wealth, honor, fame, and power.

The theology of glory is secured either by you through your hard work or by your "strength" of faith, or by God in His mighty signs and wonders, for you – His faithful servant.

This is what St. Paul was talking about when he spoke of the **Jews demanding a sign and the Greeks seeking wisdom.**

They fell into the very human thinking that glory, in whatever form, is the sign of God's grace.

Have you ever noticed that the Jews frequently asked Jesus for a sign from heaven?<sup>(on at least 4 occasions)</sup>

One of the baffling things is that they even demanded a sign of Him

right after He had performed a great sign, like the feeding the 5,000 in John 6. <sup>(last week's Gospel)</sup>

But on a human level, we can understand their desire for signs.

How many times have we thought that it would be so helpful to our faith to have a sign, a tangible piece of evidence that God is still out there and watching over you?

Or how many times have you wished that God would just prove Himself

to those who mock/defy Him like He did with Elijah on Mt. Carmel and the prophets of Baal?

This would be the quick and simple solution. Then God would have glory among them.

Or so we think.

But would such signs give faith?

Moses and the children of Israel saw miracles daily and spectacular signs throughout their 40 years but there were still great swaths of them who rebelled and broke faith with God.

And it's not like there was any lack of miraculous signs done by Jesus or the Apostles.

The Jews saw healings of illness, blindness, lameness; demons having been cast out; even people having been raised from the dead before great crowds of witnesses.

And yet they would not believe.

If we think that God showing His great power by signs will solve the problem of unbelief, then we are hoping that the Law will convert hearts instead of the Gospel.

While the Jews demanded signs, the Greeks sought wisdom.

Philosophy, the love of wisdom, was a great past time in the ancient Greek world.

St. Paul ran into this in his missionary journeys,

people just sitting around debating this or that idea, always seeking something new.

And so He gave them something new to chew on, God's wisdom, the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

Some immediately scoffed at this and figured St. Paul for a lunatic.

We humans tend to have a pretty high view of ourselves and our wisdom.

We can see this foolishness in ourselves when we believe that we, with our limited knowledge and selfish ambitions, would try to tell God how things should be.

How, if He were a merciful and loving God, He should act upon this world, but especially in my life. .

We look around at other families and congregations and see the apparent successes they have, and it's hard not to question God saying, Why do you let those heathen families have wealth?

If you would just give me more, then I could help the church.

Why are those false teaching congregations who don't preach Christ, let alone crucified, fill their parking lots?

If we had more members and more support, think of what we could do for the Gospel.

But then we hear Christ's wisdom, **One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much**, and we stand reproached and humbled, that we have not been content or faithful with what He has entrusted to us.

Spiritually too, we must confess that our human wisdom is, well, rather foolish.

St. Paul started our text saying, **the world did not know God through wisdom.**

Remember that we had lost our ability to naturally know God when we lost His image in the fall.

Without His revealing Himself to us through Jesus in Scripture,

we would know nothing of a merciful and gracious Triune God who redeemed, sanctifies, and declares us righteous before His judgement seat on account of Jesus' life and death.

We would only know of a glorious powerful, judging God who, according to our own conscience, should condemn and punish us both here on earth and for eternity in hell's flames.

Without Jesus and the cross, we would fear God's glory, His power and His wisdom, because it would be concentrated on us... and against us.

So we find that the theology of glory is a false and comfortless theology.

While on the surface the theology of glory is to make God look good,  
in the end, we see how really its goal is to make us – me – look good, here and now.

The theology of the cross, however, is rather different.

The theology of the cross does not promise wealth, honor, fame, or power, at least not in this life.

In fact, it prepares us for the opposite in this life.

By the theology of the cross, we are declared blessed if we suffer for Christ's sake.

But really, the theology of the cross is not centered upon us.

It's centered on Jesus and His cross for us.

St. Paul summarized it: **we preach Christ crucified.**

We preach a divine Savior whose glory was to give Himself in death to save His lost creatures.

We preach a Christ who is both God and man:

Man – so that He would be born under His own law to obey it

and to suffer and die in our flesh in order to redeem our flesh.

And God – so that He would be able to fulfill the law for all people

and so that His suffering and death on the cross would have infinite saving power

to redeem all people of all time.

This Christ was a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Greeks, and we struggle with it too.

How can Jesus be the answer to our troubles in this life, whether money, or illness, or injury?

How can His death comfort me? How is the resurrection helpful to me now?

The theology of the cross points you always and only to Christ,

the God-man who was crucified for your redemption from sin, guilt, and shame.

It finds true glory in the cross borne for you so that you might live in glory,

not here in this temporary and passing world, but in eternal paradise with your Savior.

It is the true comfort you need, knowing that "It is finished," as Jesus declared from the cross.

It is security knowing that if He has finished His work for your eternal salvation,

then He certainly knows how to order this world to see to it that you and His elect

are with Him in paradise.

And if that weren't enough, He gives you more divine wisdom and power and miraculous signs,  
tangible mediums to deliver Christ crucified and risen to you – in His Sacraments.

Here the world would only see foolishness and weakness.

How can water do such great things in Baptism as seal you as one of God's wise children?

How can bread and wine also be Jesus' crucified and risen body and blood given and shed for you  
to strengthen you with contentment and faithfulness and against temptation?

How can a few words from a human being truly and actually forgive the times you have stumbled  
and faltered over how God in His infinite wisdom has decided to save you and order the world?

St. Paul tells us, **in the wisdom of God, ... it pleased God through the folly**

**of what we preach to save those who believe.... We preach Christ crucified** for you.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

*Soli Deo Gloria*