

God chose the most shameful thing in the world, because the values with which the world operates, the values Jesus so clearly condemned, where some have privilege and status at the expense of others, look nothing like the world God created, the Kingdom of God.

God has deliberately debunked the world's systems of injustice in the cross. For what could be more unjust than the crucifixion of God's only Son, Jesus, who came into the world to draw us all closer to life with God at the center through the power of love? The cross makes clear that values of the world are not the highest values. God's love calls into question how the world creates hierarchies where some thrive and others are cast aside; where the innocent are victims of horrible injustice. We only need to read the headlines to see all the ways the world is horribly broken.

Paul writes to the Corinthians who are wavering in their faith. They are failing to love one another, struggling to live with one another in a world marked by division along social and economic lines. They are choosing a way of life that runs counter to the life Jesus calls them to – where they love God with all their hearts, and love their neighbors, no matter their class, status, race, or anything else that makes them different, as themselves.

The cross may seem foolish, a better translation is moronic, but in rejecting the cross and all that God does for us through it, despite it, is far from wise in Paul's view. Choose love Paul tells the Corinthians and know the wisdom, the power of God in your life.

When we witness Jesus overturning the tables of the money changers in the Temple we usually focus on corruption. Here the Jewish pilgrims have come to the Temple to make a sacrifice, an offering of thanksgiving, to God in the holiest of places, where God is present in a very real way. They travel a long way, change their money into Roman coin, and purchase whatever living thing they can afford right on the Temple Mount.

This is not the Temple of Solomon which was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 BC. No this is the Temple of Herod the Great, built on the site, but much larger and grander. It is this Temple that Jesus enters. It is this Temple where the intersection of the Empire and religion is clear – where the world's economy and God's economy come into direct conflict; where few are getting rich at the expense of the many who have come to worship God at the very place where God is present. The Empire and God's Kingdom are colliding – and Jesus reacts.

Now in John's gospel this is not the only thing at stake. It is early in John's gospel when Jesus flips over the tables in the Temple – Jesus' identity is still being revealed to his disciples and the crowds as the Messiah, the Son of God. "Why are you behaving this way?" Jesus is asked. And he answers in a pretty cryptic way. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Those surrounding him in the Temple know all about its destruction – and that Herod has been rebuilding it for forty-six years. What are you talking about, Jesus?

Except Jesus wasn't talking about a building, Jesus was talking about his body, anticipating his crucifixion and resurrection, his death and his being raised by God to new life with God. In

John's gospel, from the beginning, Jesus and God are understood to be one. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God, and the Word was in God."

The faithful come to the Temple because they believe God is present to them there. Jesus is telling them God is present to them in him. Jesus is the Holy Place where they will find God. The connection between divine and human life, God and Jesus, is inseparable; foolishness perhaps in this world, wisdom in the Kingdom of God.

We know God through Jesus; that is the gift of the incarnation. It is a divine mystery, but it is true. This is the message of the cross accomplished through the power of God. This is not how the world acts – but it is how God acts out of abundant love and deep desire for relationship with us, embodied in God's relationship with Jesus.

Maybe this sounds foolish, or moronic to some, especially those who thrive in the world as it is today. But to the faithful its wisdom is the power of God's love in our lives. Lent, especially, calls us to pay attention to the cross and all that it means for us and for the world; and then live into it, in ways that mirrors Jesus; that is faithful to him and, as we rehearsed last week, the vows we make in baptism. The cross is all about God's love. So, we love God and we love one another. Nothing foolish about that.