

Which Wisdom?

Sunday School Lesson

I Corinthians 2:1-16

June 29, 2025

The two semester introductory Bible course required in seminary changed my life. It is amazing how many lectures I can still remember because they reached deep down into my soul and gave hope to someone who had struggled to find worth. When we were doing academic work on a passage, the professors were strict when it came to sources and methods but they still insisted that Scripture was more than academics. To understand the text, you had to let it speak to you and they suggested you spend a few days with a text before you opened a commentary.

When you were finally ready to hear wisdom from a Bible scholar on the text, you had a chance to see with fresh eyes, allowing the Spirit to speak with you. When I finally got to the commentary, I often found that the scholar saw something else but that did not negate what I had experienced in the text. On occasion, my reading would miss something that the scholar would point out and that was always helpful. So much of what we read into a text depends on the various paradigms of our own experience.

Our lesson today asks us if we are seeing the world through a lens of abundance or scarcity. Do we communicate with others with vulnerability or power? I have to admit I have heard some pretty powerful preachers. They are dynamic, interesting, and inspiring. But I have also heard preachers who are vulnerable and while their delivery may not be as inspiring, their message often breaks through because the Spirit, through their vulnerability has spoken deeply to something my soul needed to hear.

Let us pray

O Holy God, transform our lives as we follow you. Give us eyes to see and ears to hear and most of all, hearts that do not judge. Amen.

Our Purpose Statement: **To discern how the Holy Spirit works in our lives so that we have the mind of Christ.**

Paul was not a charismatic preacher like Apollo or even Peter. He was educated in rhetoric, the art of using language to persuade, motivate, or inform an audience, but he did not use it in his preaching as he does in his writing. Instead, he chose to speak from the heart of what he had experienced in Jesus. He used plain language and he left the convincing up to the Holy Spirit. He knew what most preachers have yet to realize. Our words do not change lives – that is the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul understood that you had to give the Spirit room to move and that will not happen if you are trying to control the room with your own words.

Now here is where things can get interesting. While Paul understood the workings of the Spirit and the profound changes that had happened in the lives of the people who were a part of the church in Corinth, but the people who had felt those changes did not fully

comprehend how the Spirit worked so they tried to replicate the Spirit's work through their own interpretations and manipulations. Things did not go very well with that. When we believe that we can do God's work with our own limited resources and under our own control, the outcome does not end up the same way. We get competitive as to who is in charge and who is more popular. We develop a scarcity attitude, which is the opposite of the Spirit's generosity and abundance. We become shallow with shallow expectations. We fail to realize all the possibilities and we launch into one conflict after another. Here is a quotation from our lesson today:

Just as it is for children, it's difficult for us always to make the right decisions. Our heavenly Parent and earthly parents alike deal with the reality that we can prepare someone as well as we can, but eventually, they will be on their own and will decide whether to rely on the wisdom they have received.

The world draws us in another direction. We desire kindness, love of neighbor, and living to nurture and build up one another. But the world wants us to see competition and enemies and tries to convince us that we are more important and better than they are. We need to steal the spotlight from them, we're told, so that we can get what is ours.

When the world is pushing scarcity down your throat every day, it is very difficult to remain an advocate for abundance. Paul is trying to help them make room for the Holy Spirit to work but he first has to get them to back off trying to control everything. Let me state what I have learned from the Spirit – you can leave room for the Spirit to control things or you can step in and control things but only one of you can be in charge. The Spirit is a gentleman as my good friend, Bruce Bennett, once said. If you are trying to control the situation, it will step back and allow it. That is what has happened to the church in Corinth and look at the mess.

Paul is helping them to let go and allow God's wisdom to work. Worldly wisdom tells us to fight for our place among scarce resources. Worldly wisdom pushes us to win at all cost. And yet, most of us reach an age where the prize for winning is not worth what it is costing us. Jesus offers you peace, joy, wholeness, forgiveness, and acceptance. You belong. You are enough. You can stop trying to prove yourself and you can allow God to love you.

There is no trick. There is no catch. And there is no but... Allow the Spirit some room this week to reassure you and to give you peace.

**Do you have a favorite Scripture you go to in times of stress?
Share it with others.**

Let us pray:

Holy Jesus, our living water, meet us where we are and offer us your life-giving presence and Spirit. May your grace overflow to all we meet this week. Bring your healing and wholeness to our community today. Amen.