

Podunk Ponderings: Plain or Polished?

No. 3



Recently I have been preaching through the book of 1 Corinthians. If you are acquainted with the book of 1 Corinthians, then you have likely noticed some of the similarities between the Greek world of the early Gentile church, and the contemporary Western world around us today. Particularly in the area of celebrity preachers and church “branding”. Devotion to celebrity preaching, and the branding that follows them, has reached epidemic levels in our nation.

In the Greek world, philosophical systems and thinkers dominated the cultural landscape. People enjoyed debating competing ways of thinking, and the smoother spoken the individual presenting, the more people they would win to their view or philosophical system. It was hobby to go and listen to the newest exciting philosophical proposals.

Paul very deliberately avoided playing this game of intellectual entertainment when he went to Corinth. He says in his letter,

“And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”
- 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 ESV

Paul *intentionally spoke plainly*, so that people would not be persuaded to Christianity simply because it was new, or seemed intellectually superior for a moment. Paul spoke plainly so that only those in whom the Spirit of God was working would respond. “...I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, *so that* your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

It is tempting in the American celebrity culture we live in to try to play the celebrity game. As a pastor, it can be tempting to try to build a ministry around smooth talking, flashy advertising, and manipulative marketing strategies. Resist that temptation.

I am not at all saying that we should not labor to have effective church ministries or persuasive sermons, but speak plainly about sin and our need of the Savior. Speak plainly about the holiness of God our fallenness before Him. Speak plainly about the Gospel, and trust God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, with the rest.

Sincerely,

A Podunk Pastor

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