

# *“Losing Your Voice”*

**Sunday, February 5, 2017**

**5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after the Epiphany**



## **1 Corinthians 2:1-16 (NRSV)**

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I didn't come preaching God's secrets to you like I was an expert in speech or wisdom.

I had made up my mind not to think about anything while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and to preach him as crucified.

I stood in front of you with weakness, fear, and a lot of shaking. My message and my preaching weren't presented with convincing wise words but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

I did this so that your faith might not depend on the wisdom of people but on the power of God.

## **DEFINITION OF WISDOM**

What *we* say *is* wisdom to people who are **mature**.

It isn't a wisdom that comes from the present day or from today's leaders who are being reduced to nothing.

We talk about **God's** wisdom, which has been hidden as a secret. God determined this wisdom in advance, before time began, for our glory.

It is a wisdom that none of the present-day rulers have understood, because if they did understand it, they would never have crucified the Lord of glory!

But this is precisely what is written: God has prepared things for those who love him that no eye has seen, or ear has heard, or that haven't crossed the mind of any human being.

God has revealed these things to us through the Spirit. The Spirit searches everything, including the depths of God.

Who knows a person's depths except their own spirit that lives in them?

In the same way, no one has known the depths of God except God's Spirit.

We haven't received the world's spirit but **God's** Spirit so that we can know the things given to us by God.

These are the things we are talking about—not with words taught by human wisdom but with words taught by the Spirit—we are interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people.

But people who are unspiritual don't accept the things from God's Spirit.

They are foolishness to them and can't be understood, because they can only be comprehended in a spiritual way.

Spiritual people comprehend everything, but they themselves aren't understood by anyone.

Who has known the mind of the Lord, who will advise him? But **we** have the mind of Christ.

This is the Word of God for the people of God.

*Thanks, be to God.*

**[2<sup>ND</sup> Service: Affirmation of Faith]**

**[MESSAGE]**

It seems like we encounter much of Paul's writing as he is being critical of the early church.

He has a habit of scolding people and telling them what they need to do to lead better lives.

To be fair, that was part of his job as a leader in the fledgling Jesus movement.

It was hard for new believers to figure out how to co-exist with the pagan cultures in which they lived.

Paul was doing his best to keep them straight.

One might think that times have changed and that it would be easier for believers to get along.

Even though much has changed, I'm not so sure that it **is** any easier to be a follower of Jesus within a culture that sees things differently.

Like the early church at Corinth, Christians today are surrounded by the noise of competing ideas.

It's easy to lose your voice if you try to talk over all the noise.

Maybe there's another way.

**Let us pray**...Lord, help us understand that true wisdom comes from you. Lead us to share your story with boldness. In Jesus' name, we pray.  
**Amen.**

Anybody here ever lose your voice?

*It is so frustrating!*

You try so hard to make yourself heard, but you just can't push out enough sound to get past the background noise.

The harder you try, the more it hurts, and the less sound you can produce.

Sometimes I feel as if we are losing our voice as Christians in the contemporary world.

It is hard to be heard above the noise and we grow hoarse from the effort.

Paul, however, seems to believe that the problem may be that we are losing our voice because we have forgotten what to say.

As Paul discusses the true wisdom of God, he challenges us to realize that God's wisdom is always at odds with the wisdom of this world.

The church at Corinth is insecure within the surrounding culture.

There is so much noise around them that they are having a hard time hearing the true message.

That leads them to having difficulty articulating the message to newcomers and the church suffers from lack of growth.

So they begin to use their own wisdom to come up with ways to stem the flow.

The church today faces the same challenges as we are threatened with decline.

We flock to the latest seminar or church growth guru to help us “*grow*” our congregations.

We only need to cultivate seven habits of highly successful congregations, or five practices of the fruitful church, or follow twelve simple steps or adopt a new mission statement.

**We proclaim that Jesus is the answer, but we're not sure what the question is!**

I think that we sometimes get confused between what God wants and what the world wants.

The noise we hear comes out of a perceived need to own *more* and *better* and right now.

Shouts of “*Me first!*” and “*What’s in it for me?*” drown out the voice of Jesus.

Worldly rhetoric is loud and pervasive on a variety of issues that force us to choose between protectionism and hospitality, convenience and compassion, fear and love.

God’s wisdom challenges our conventional understanding of power: individually, socially, and institutionally.

If we mirror the world’s understanding of power, we cease to be the church.

Paul calls us to mimic God’s understanding of power to re-discover our voice as God’s people.

Only then will we be empowered to become the kind of community that brings healing and new life to the world.

Paul engages this argument with the urbane and sophisticated people of Corinth who are certain that knowledge will lead them to the truth – a truth that they can control and manage.

The truth they seek masks their fear and protects them from the truth of Christ crucified.

Paul reminds them that, from the beginning, he has only preached to them about Christ.

The mystery of God's wisdom is revealed in the humility, weakness, and vulnerability of the self-emptying love of God on the cross.

The church has lost its voice when it finds itself asking:

*“Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?”*

The answer is clear:

*“Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.”*

We must not lose our voice, church, and we must make ourselves heard above the noise of hate and prejudice and oppression.

Jesus said: *“Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.”* (Matthew 10:40)

*“I was a stranger and you welcomed me”*  
(Matthew 25:35).

We must be willing to separate the will of God from the politics of humanity.

Whenever the laws of this world run contrary to the will of God we must raise our voices above the din and proclaim Jesus Christ crucified.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**