

Text: 1 Corinthians 2: 6-16

Theme: Series: A Church Just Like Ours – True Wisdom

Sermon delivered by Revd Canon Dele Agbelusi during Service of the Word on 20/08/2017 at 10.30am

Paul has outlined the first two methods for healing the wound of divisiveness in the church at Corinth. In the previous verses he concentrated his attention on what is going right (1;1-9) in the church, and on the main thrust of the Good News, Christ crucified (1:18-2:5).

Now he engages with some of the words and terminologies, (Mature, spiritual, secret, wisdom) which the Corinthians are accustomed to and redefines them to include everybody within the family of Christ.

Paul wants us to understand that out there in the streets, and especially to those who have just newly come into the Church, we introduce them to the basic elements of Christianity; but when people are a little more mature we give them deeper teaching about what these basic facts mean. An immature person (such as a baby) doesn't have the discernment to know what is good to eat and what isn't. A baby will put anything into its mouth.

So let us be clear in our minds that Paul is not talking about a caste situation in the Christian body but that there are differences in the stages of our Christian growth and perception. While all Christians are potentially perfect, not all are what God wants them to be. The tragedy so often is that people are content to remain at the elementary stage when they should be going on strenuously to allow the Holy Spirit to deepen their walk with God.

So in verse 6, Paul declares boldly that we speak wisdom: Just because Paul would not cater to the Corinthian love of human wisdom does not mean that his message had no wisdom. In fact, there is a vast wealth of wisdom sealed off to everyone except the Christian. **The message of the Cross is God's secret wisdom which is not open to those who depend on their intellectual ability to discern it.**

It is the gift of God and it came into the world with Jesus Christ. All our discoveries are not so much what our minds have found out as what God has told us. This by no means frees us from the responsibility of human effort. Only the student who works can make himself fit to receive the real riches of the mind of a great teacher. It is so with us and God. The more we strive to understand, the more God can tell us; and there is no limit to this process, because the riches of God are unsearchable.

That is why verse 8, **"None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory". The crucifixion of Jesus Christ resulted in the disarming of the powers of hell, (Colossians 2:15), and had Satan and his demons known, they were sealing their own doom by inciting the crucifixion, they would not have done it.**

Paul consequently writes to remind us and restate that God's wisdom and plan is past our finding out if left to ourselves. The wisdom of this age is theory, the wisdom of God is truth and reality. The wisdom of this age leads to what is termed existentialism (a philosophical theory emphasizing the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining his or her own development through acts of the will, the wisdom of God refers to eternity. The wisdom of this age is about change, but the wisdom of God is certainty. The wisdom of this age is reason, the wisdom of God is revelation and this revelation comes through the Spirit of God.

As it is written, “No eye has seen, nor ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him-but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. (verse 9)

Eye has not seen: Most people wrongly take **the things which God has prepared for those who love Him** to mean the things which are waiting for us in heaven. While it is true that we cannot comprehend the greatness of heaven, that isn't what Paul means here, because 1 Corinthians 2:10 tells us **God has revealed them to us through His Spirit**. This glorious thing *has* been revealed by the gospel.

Paul lays down that the only person who can tell us about God is the Spirit of God. He uses a human analogy. There are feelings which are so personal, things which are so private, experiences which are so intimate that no one knows them except a man's own spirit. Paul argues that the same is true of God.

No one besides God, not even your spouse or a sibling, knows what you're thinking right now. You would have to enlighten us. In the same way, there is no way for us to know what God is thinking unless he tells us. Thankfully he does that through the Holy Spirit. There are deep and intimate things in him which only his Spirit knows; and that Spirit is the only person who can lead us into really intimate knowledge of God.

The Holy Spirit hasn't spoken directly to us but he did somehow communicate with people like the Apostle Paul who then wrote those words down in what we today call the Bible. Do you want to gain real wisdom? Real wisdom comes from the Spirit. And the Spirit speaks to us through the pages of the Bible. This is why many Christians treat the Bible with such respect. When we come together to study the Bible we're not just examining an ancient text; we're reading God's mind! Reading and studying it leads to an eternally secure future.

Since every believer has **received . . . the Spirit who is from God**, every believer has the access to this spiritual wisdom. This does *not* mean every believer has equal spiritual wisdom. And it does *not* mean we will understand all spiritual mysteries. It *does* mean every believer can understand the basics of the Christian message, which is unattainable (and undesirable) by human wisdom.

The next important thing to know in Paul's train of thought is that the purpose behind the gift of the Spirit is that we may understand (know) what God has freely given us (v 12). Salvation is a free gift from God, man cannot earn his way into heaven.

Paul talks not only about revelation, but a regeneration, a transformation, a reexamination. Philosophy is founded on a pursuit, a search, but Christianity speaks of a finding, a discovery, a conclusion, a result, a verdict, an outcome, an ending.

1 Cor. 2:14: **“The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.”** The man without the Spirit of God is usually referred to as the natural man. The natural man is where we all start life, the life inherited from Adam. The natural man is unregenerate man, unsaved man. He is concerned about what we eat and drink and wear and how we keep this body that is decaying.

God is not displeased when you have to eat and sleep and work. But life on this level alone is without spiritual insight: the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. Spiritual things seem foolishness to the natural man. Why waste time on “spiritual” things when you could be making money or having fun? It would be wrong to expect the natural man to

see and value spiritual things, just as it would be wrong to expect a corpse to see the material world.

Paul's understanding of the Spirit is different from that of the Corinthians, who see the Spirit in terms of miracle and power. For Paul the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and brings to life again that same Christ of the cross."

Too many Christians still think like natural men, refusing to spiritually discern things. When our only concern is for "what works" or the "bottom line," we are not spiritually discerning, and we are thinking like the natural man, even though we might be saved.

Verse 15. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments: Paul is not saying that every Christian is above every criticism (after all, much of this letter is criticism). The point is clear: no natural man is equipped to judge a spiritual man.

Verse 16. For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:15-16).

But we have the mind of Christ - He has endowed us with the same disposition, being born again by his Spirit; therefore, we are capable of knowing his mind and receiving the teachings of his Spirit. These teachings we do receive, and therefore are well qualified to convey them to others.

For example, in his letter to the church at Rome, Paul tells them we access the mind of Christ through offering ourselves to God as a living sacrifice. He says very practically in **Romans 12:2**, "**Don't copy the behaviour and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.**" (The New Living Translation). Sounds like there's a decision involved over which we have some measure of power, albeit enabled by grace. **The practical and personal question is: will I align my thoughts and beliefs with the messages coming to me from this world, or will I align my thoughts and beliefs with what God says is true?**

Another example. In his letter to the Philippians Paul says, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5, KJV). He then describes what that would mean: that He humbled himself, that He poured out His life in love, that He became a servant. Apparently having the mind of Christ involves not only what goes on between my ears, but also what I do with my hands and feet and mouth toward others.

The mind of Christ must be perfect. The mind of Christ is holy, full of love, and totally at peace. Does that describe me? Does that describe you?