

THE MIND OF CHRIST**1 Corinthians 2:6-16**

INTRO: Mennonite Central Committee has a program called the International Volunteer Exchange Program which is a yearlong volunteer work and cultural exchange opportunity for young, Christian adults. Participants come from more than 25 countries around the world to volunteer in the U.S. or Canada, where they live with a local person or family. If you are one of these volunteers you might serve at a school, thrift shop, retirement home, day care, farm and other settings. It's a great opportunity for folks from around the world to come into a cross-cultural situation.

We have friends in Lititz, PA who own a Bed & Breakfast. When they were starting out in the mid-1980s they had a number of these volunteers. They worked in the B&B, worshipped with us at church, and traveled around the country. At the time we called them Mennonite Trainees. My family got close to these young people and one of them, a German girl named Sigrid, went to a Philadelphia Phillies game with us. You never know how complicated baseball is until you have to explain to someone who has absolutely no concept of the game. She sat between Kathy and me and tried as we might to explain it, she could NOT understand the game. How hard can it be?

I was a little more understanding of Sigrid's difficulty when I watched cricket on TV when I was in India. Gajillions of people play the game and it is all the rage in India, Pakistan, Australia, and other places – BUT I just can't figure it out—and it's even played with bats and balls like baseball and softball. But I still could not, and still have not, figured out the game of cricket.

The world is similarly confused about Christianity and simply cannot figure out the way of Christ. Not without the Spirit, anyway. And that's Paul's point in our text for today. Listen,

(Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16)

This month, and for the next several months we will be looking at 1 Corinthians as we talk about being the church in challenging times. What the church in Corinth was experiencing was amazingly similar to what we are living today.

We've seen over the past several weeks the Corinthian church was struggling with factions and influences from old belief systems that lessened the effectiveness of Christ Followers. In these first chapters Paul is addressing all these issues and as you can see, he is continuing his discussion of the so-called wisdom of the world as opposed to the wisdom of God. Last week we saw how the wisdom of God is foolishness to the world. In the text I just read he goes on to point out that it simply cannot be grasped by anyone who does not have the Holy Spirit and that is why it is so foreign to a person who does not have the mind of Christ. Just like Sigrid and baseball and me with cricket, they just can't wrap their mind around it.

Here's why . . .

God's wisdom can only be known by God's people

- The opposite of it is what Paul calls the wisdom of this age (v 6). You can be smart in the ways and wisdom of the world and lost and empty – you will end up missing the wisdom of God like a shot in the dark. I've referred to this before, but it works here: Charles Templeton was a colleague of Billy Graham who became an atheist. Lee Strobel interviewed him for his book "THE CASE FOR CHRIST" Let me read a bit of the interview to illustrate Templeton missed the wisdom of God, because it comes out in different ways. Listen,

And how do you assess this Jesus?" It seemed like the next logical question—but I wasn't ready for the response it would evoke.

Templeton's body language softened. It was as if he suddenly felt relaxed and comfortable in talking about an old and dear friend. His voice, which at times had displayed such a sharp and insistent edge, now took on a melancholy and reflective tone. His guard seemingly down, he spoke in an unhurried pace, almost nostalgically, carefully choosing his words as he talked about Jesus.

"He was," Templeton began, "the greatest human being who has ever lived. He was a moral genius. His ethical sense was unique. He was the intrinsically wisest person that I've ever encountered in my life or in my readings. His commitment was total and led to his own death, much to the detriment of the world. What could one say about him except that this was a form of greatness?"

I was taken aback. "You sound like you really care about him," I said.

“Well, yes, he is the most important thing in my life,” came his reply. “I . . . I . . . I . . . ,” he stuttered, searching for the right word, ‘I know it may sound strange, but I have to say . . . I adore him!’ . . .
 “. . . Everything good I know, everything decent I know, everything pure I know, I learned from Jesus. Yes . . . yes. And tough! Just look at Jesus. He castigated people. He was angry. People don’t think of him that way, but they don’t read the Bible. He had a righteous anger. He cared for the oppressed and exploited. There’s no question that he had the highest moral standard, the least duplicity, the greatest compassion, of any human being in history. There have been many other wonderful people, but Jesus is Jesus’

“Uh . . . but . . . no,’ he said slowly, ‘he’s the most’ He stopped, then started again. “In my view,” he declared, “he is the most important human being who has ever existed.”

That’s when Templeton uttered the words I never expected to hear from him. “And if I may put it this way,” he said as his voice began to crack, ‘I . . . miss . . . him!’

With that tears flooded his eyes. He turned his head and looked downward, raising his left hand to shield his face from me. His shoulders bobbed as he wept. . . . “

- This is an example of someone who chose his own wisdom over God’s wisdom. He rejected the ministry of the Holy Spirit and thereby chose to reject God. In the end he missed his best friend, Jesus, God the Son; because he could not surrender to God the Father. He chose the wisdom of humanity. The wisdom of God cannot be perceived as wisdom by those who are seeking the wisdom of humanity. The wisdom of God is only recognized by those who have the Holy Spirit speaking into their lives. It’s as simple as this . . .

The things of God are revealed by his Spirit

- Barclay points out “*the only person who can tell us about God is the Spirit of God.*” And the Spirit of God is who reveals the power of the crucified Lord. It was the absence of the wisdom of God that caused the rulers of the age to actually crucify Jesus. If they’d had the Spirit they would have recognized Jesus for who he was. It’s like this, people are revealed for who they are by their response to the Cross. It’s sad to think that Charles Templeton missed his best friend because of his lack of the Holy Spirit. Notice he said that Jesus’s death was a *detriment* to the world. He had it all backwards. It was Jesus death that gave the world the possibility of salvation.
- Paul says *The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.* 1 Corinthians 2:10b-11. If we have the mind of the Spirit we have the mind of God – that is he explains to us the mind of God. It’s beyond us without the explanation. I knew baseball, I just couldn’t explain it to Sigrid. The Spirit does a much better job. He breaks down the things of God into Christ Follower size nuggets. Without the Holy Spirit, God is not understandable.
- As he does this, Paul turns the words and thinking of those who were teaching the philosophies of the day back on them. He knew what they thought – in fact he had been one of those thought leaders when he had been a rising star in Judaism. Then the Spirit got hold of him. This is a reason why, to a certain extent, it’s good to know what the world thinks. When you see or hear an unbiblical viewpoint, familiarize yourself with it so you know how the world thinks about it so that you know where they are coming from.
- But all the time, make sure you . . .

Look like the Spirit

- In Gordon Fee’s words, “*The Spirit of God should identify God’s people in such a way that their values and worldview are radically different from the wisdom of this age.*” You probably get tired of hearing it, but it remains true. We need to be different. Having the mind of Christ means being different. Having the mind of Christ doesn’t mean we have to know everything and we certainly don’t know the mind of God, but we know God and that’s good enough. That’s sets us up to understand the mystery (v 7) when the world sees it as foolishness. That doesn’t make us elite or special – it just makes us saved.
- By looking like the Spirit I mean we must allow to Spirit to speak into our lives and speak through our lives. This is how transformation works. Just because people are enamored with the wisdom of the world doesn’t mean the Spirit can’t get through to them. As we allow the Spirit to work through us, others will

move from the so-called wisdom of the world, which is empty and leads to despair, to the wisdom of God which leads to joy and eternal life.

- Listen to the Spirit. A friend and colleague told me the other day of a huge change that came to his life as he sought the Lord in prayer. As he concentrated on the Lord, asking him for some specific things, the Lord palpably spoke into my friend's spirit, revealing that he, the Lord, would be doing exactly what my friend was asking, but in a much different way than my friend expected. He said that it was such a powerful sense of God's word to him, that he opened his eyes and actually looked up. Then he proceeded to do exactly what the Spirit told him to do, because that man has the mind of Christ.
- As you listen to the Holy Spirit by his still, small voice of encouragement or conviction or prompting, you more and more will have the mind of Christ. On the other hand, if you reject that still, small voice, more and more you will find his voice fading. Keep listening for the promptings of the Holy Spirit. As you do, you will consistently have the mind of Christ. Amen.