

The Lord's work is often a mystery to us. For example, we don't know how he created the world. We don't know why he planted the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden. And we don't know why he didn't give the penguin the ability to fly! However, not everything about God is a mystery for us. There are many things he has explained about how he is not done with his church yet, and how we're a part of his plans until Jesus comes again. This morning we're going to talk about what that means for our walk with God and with one another.

## OPENING PRAYER

### 1st CORINTHIANS 1:26-31

**For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; <sup>27</sup>but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, <sup>28</sup>and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no man may boast before God. <sup>30</sup>But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, <sup>31</sup>so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."**

St. Paul wrote, **"consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble" (v.26)**. Our calling from God is a great encouragement, especially if you're dumb, weak, and powerless! But the fact is, is that it is easier for those who have nothing than for those who are rich, smart, and gifted to appreciate the things of God. That's what Paul was saying. Later on, however, he addressed the Christians who had plenty, telling them they must share with those less fortunate (e.g., 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 11:21-22). So church membership was not confined to the impoverished.

Even so, we know that in Corinth, just as in Rome, many believers were slaves and former slaves. So Paul's words were a great encouragement to them. He wrote, **"God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong" (v.27)**.

Paul was contrasting the world's wisdom with God's, a wisdom which lifts up people's hearts, a wisdom that is light amidst the darkness, a wisdom that is more than knowledge, a wisdom which is the very hand of God in our midst.

When I look at the children in our preschool, I think here is a little girl, here is a little boy who might be our next president. For God works in and among us. And there is no limit to what he can do. When I talk to one of the kids in our after school program, I think here is a young boy, here is a young girl who might go to medical school and become a doctor. For God works in and among us. And there is no limit to what he can do. When I greet the people from our neighborhood who come for a box of food, I think here is a man, here is a woman, who could be a leader in our community. For God works in and among us. And there is no limit to what he can do in his wisdom.

In 1952, Pastor Marvin Suhr just graduated from seminary. He was 25 years old, and he was from Nebraska. He'd never held a regular job in his life but binding hay on his daddy's farm. But on graduation day his paperwork told him he was going to be a missionary in California. And he came. He combed the streets of Whittier with nothing but the love of Jesus in his heart and a vision for bringing together a group of people to worship him. Who but God could've known that 74 people would join Pastor Suhr for worship at the American Legion Hall on that Sunday, the first worship service of what became Faith Lutheran Church here on the corner of Mulberry and Mills?

As St. Paul explains, God exalts, God lifts up, God shines his light where he wills. God does his work in us, a people the world sees as foolish, weak, and lowly; a world that despises; and God brings forth life from **"the things that are not."**

I like those words, that God chooses **"the things that are not."** One of my favorite Bible passages is the first 3-verses of the Bible, which are, **"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. <sup>3</sup>Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light" (Genesis 1:1-3).**

**"The earth was formless and void":** When God created the world, he began with **"the things that are not"**; he began with nothing, just emptiness; there was

nothing but God himself. But he had the heart to share his being, his life, and he created; he brought about life with nothing but his will and his Word. So the Lord hardly broke a sweat in the work he did through Pastor Suhr!

In the Tuesday night Bible study a couple of weeks ago, we studied the miracle of Gideon's victory over the Midianites. Gideon began with an army of 32,000 men, but God said, **"The people who are with you are too many for me to give Midian into their hands, for Israel would become boastful and say, 'My own power has delivered me'" (Judges 7:2).** God made Gideon reduce the size of his army to just 300 men, and then he conquered the Midianites who were **"as numerous as locusts" (Judges 7:13).**

God takes delight in demonstrating the power of his Word. He saves us from hell with the declaration that we've been forgiven. He will raise us from the grave upon Christ's second advent just by uttering our names. He declares he loves us with the breath of life.

Paul wrote, **"by his doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption" (v.30).** The Corinthians had a nasty habit of aligning themselves with their favorite preacher-teacher. And that would've been their end if Paul hadn't reeducated them. For the wisdom of men is shallow, worldly, and it asks more questions than it can answer. But God's call on our lives made us one with his son, Jesus.

This means that even though we don't feel worthy, God has made us worthy. This means that even though we feel weak, we have been made strong. This means that even though we think we are inadequate, we have everything we need to do this work God has called us to do.

The world's teachings do not have power before God, and they will all be destroyed someday. But the teachings of the Lord are true, for they are eternal words filled with power. They are the words of hope which were instilled in us when we first knew Jesus as our Lord and Savior. They are the words of eternal life.

Paul wrote elsewhere, to the church in Colossae, **"My goal is that (the church) may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that (it) may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that (it) may know the mystery of**

**God, namely, Christ, <sup>3</sup> in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:2-3).**

The “**mystery of God,**” his complete plan for humanity from creation until the end, is found in one name, “**Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**”

The Prophet Jeremiah wrote, “**Thus says the LORD, “Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; <sup>24</sup>but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth”**”

This Word is our word, a Word which has power, a Word which we use to do the work God has called us to do. Thus any boasting we do is on behalf of the Lord, for it is the Lord who has given us a vision, who has preserved us, who has lifted us up by his own hand. And we give thanks.

Paul wrote, “**when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. <sup>2</sup> For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:1-2).** The wisdom of this world is a black hole; it is nothing but two-bit words strung together by people who are trying to make sense of their otherwise dismal lives. But the wisdom of God is Christ on the Cross; it is Christ resurrected; it is Christ on the clouds returning to take us home.

This week let us give thanks that the Lord is not done with us yet.

This week let us pray that our good works in our community will bear much fruit.

And this week let us share this Good News with another person who really needs to hear it, in the name of Jesus. Amen.