

“Foolishness” ([1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5](#))(12.8.19)

[1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5](#) (NIV84)

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.

26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

2 When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.

The word of God for the people of God.

Title: Foolishness

LET US PRAY.

INTRODUCTION:

The innovative and great English surgeon, Sir Astley Cooper was visiting Paris and a prominent French surgeon. As they had both been refining a new surgical technique, the Frenchman asked him how many times he had performed the surgery. Dr. Cooper replied that he had performed the operation thirteen times. “Ah, but, Sir Astley, I have done it one hundred and sixty times.”

“How many times did you save his life?” continued the curious Frenchmen, after he had looked into the blank amazement of Sir Astley’s face. “I,” said the Englishman, “saved eleven

out of the thirteen. How many did you save out of one hundred and sixty?" Well, I lost them all; but the operation was very brilliant."

How many popular ministries might result in the same verdict! Souls are not saved, but the preaching is very brilliant. Thousands are attracted and operated on by gifted speakers, but how tragic if they should have to say to their admirers, "I lost them all, but the sermons were very brilliant!"

My concern is the co-opting of Christmas by the culture. My concern is the surrendering of Christmas by Christians. Jesus is the pivotal person in human history. On the surface, it would seem that the annual celebration of his birthday would be a great evangelical event. It should motivate people to know the Messiah. Instead, Christmas has been compromised by covetousness. Tinsel and toys take precedence over the Christ Child's coming.

BODY:

Why might this be? In large part, we Christians are the blame. We fail to tell the story properly through ignorance or indifference. For instance, we include the Magi in the Christmas story, in our nativity scenes. This promotes the gift giving aspects that dominate our annual celebrations. The truth is that the Magi may have arrived up to two years after Jesus' birth as Matthew chapter two clearly states.

This is important because the whole tenor and seriousness of the situation are diminished. When King Herod realized that the Magi ignored his command to return to him, he ordered the killing of all boys under the age of two in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. This insight shows the necessity of a Savior in a fallen and broken world where babies are killed.

And, it is logical to assume that the gifts from the Magi financed Joseph, Mary, and Jesus' escape to Egypt. An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, warning them to flee. Almighty God, provided for this new family to survive. Think about how many children and families are suffering around the world this Christmas.

Another reason Christmas isn't what it should be is because of the foolishness of those who are perishing. Their carnal minds are darkened against the truth that they are sinners in need of a Savior. Their hearts are hardened by sin and self-centeredness.

Earlier this week, I read an article, "Why Christian Movies are So Terrible" by Jared C. Wilson. Here are a few of his thoughts:

"The paint-by-numbers aesthetic of the new wave of Christian movies persists in making the faith appear trite, inauthentic, corny and—worst of all, as far as the culture goes—uncool.

Why despite all the gains made in technology and budgeting can't Christians make good movies?

Or let's consider this: The gospel always sounds offensive to the world. Maybe Christian movies that articulate faith content clearly are destined to be laughed out of the theater, regardless of the excellence of their cinematic context, if only because the cross is

foolishness to those who are perishing.

What if there isn't a way to make the gospel sound cool? That's something worth pondering for Christian moviegoers and Christian movie-makers alike.

In any event, if your movie's gonna get laughed at for being Christian, maybe at least make sure it's because of the cross and not because it's corny."

As I pondered why our faith seems foolish, I thought about an old comedy routine by Bob Newhart. He imagines how a phone call by Admiral Doubleday to a modern day game company might sound when Doubleday tries to explain his new game called baseball. To someone who was unfamiliar with baseball, it certainly would seem too complicated and convoluted.

Now, I want you to imagine Angel Gabriel trying to get the story of Jesus published. He calls a Literary Agent named Lucy Fur to help him find a publisher. [Ring bell; answer phone] Good morning, this is Lucy Fur, Literary Agent.

Good morning Angel. Oh, I'm sorry. Angel isn't your first name? It's what you are? [finger point at the phone] So Gabriel, how can I help you?

What's the title of the story? The Gospel.

Good News to whom? OK, Jesus is the good news. You know Gabriel, biographies aren't really selling nowadays.

Oh in that case, Savior of the world, Son of God and all, that's different. He comes as a baby. That's already been done in the Superman story. Sorry if I seem a little skeptical.

Human parents huh, Mary, Joseph, a poor couple from the country. But Joseph isn't the biological father? Oh, now that spices it up.

Not really. Mary is a virgin and the Holy Spirit comes over her. Slow down...that is a lot to take in Gabriel.

A host of angels appears to a bunch of shepherds. Again with the angels? Say is this a gag?

Ok Gabriel, let's jump ahead. Ah hah, Jesus gathers a group of guys to change the world.

Twelve uneducated mostly blue collar guys.

He is an unemployed homeless carpenter – Birds of the air have nests and foxes have holes but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. Sorry I asked.

Miracles, many miracles. Feeding thousands with a few loaves of bread; walking on water; raising the dead. Oh, no...no, I'm still here.

So Gabriel, how does he save the world? He dies. The hero of the story dies on a bloody cross. But God raises Him from the dead and he ascended into heaven on the clouds.

Where does the saving the world come in? The Holy Spirit comes and the Church is formed. You know Gabriel, I don't think I am going to be able to help you out. The story just isn't credible enough for my publishers. You might want to consider self-publishing.

Thank you. You have a nice life too. Good-bye Gabriel.

In a manner of speaking the Bible was self-published. As a matter of fact, the Bible is the bestselling book of all time with over 5 billion copies. And, the Church is the vehicle by

which God intends to share the good news of Jesus.

Here is a satellite picture of a church, Absecon UMC. You can see it is on Church St., appropriately named. Carol and I drive by there very frequently. It is our home church.

Also, you can see it is on the corner of where Pitney ends or starts in Absecon. This happens to be the route we take to Port Republic to see our grandchildren.

Last Friday, we had a special night. Our son and his wife Amy, went to his work Christmas party. We went out to Port Republic to have dinner with the six grandkids: four from Port, one from China, and one from Vietnam. After dinner we went to our Emmaus Sharing and Caring Coffee House for dessert. Good sweets, people, and music too.

Then we went to our home in Absecon to put up our Christmas tree. It's nice that they are old enough now to do most of the work! Carol made popcorn. We played some games. And, it was time to go back to Port.

So, we are driving here up Church St. There was an SUV that was stopped at the entrance to the church. As we approached them, they apparently decided not to turn into the church but sped ahead. I realized that they were going to cross into the One Way section of Church Street driving against traffic. I started beeping at them, but they just drove right by the large Do Not Enter sign.

Carol said she didn't find it surprising. She has often seen people going the wrong way on the one way section. But, because they know it is the wrong way, they back up the street as they are going in the wrong direction. She speculates that they figure if they are stopped by the police they can say they are pointed in the right direction. Our grandson Nate suggested that their brains must be pointed in the wrong direction.

Yes, we live in a strange time when everyone does what is right in their own mind. For me, one of the most tragic things is that too many church-going folk are worshipping a Jesus of their own concoction. It is a cultural Christ. It is a Savior of their imaginations. They do not worship the Jesus of the Bible. Therefore, they cannot model the Jesus of the Bible. They cannot share the Jesus of the Bible. They have a weak, powerless, shadow of faith in a fictional character that never existed.

Most Americans hope for a type of Hallmark Movie Christmas. If you have seen many of these movies, the Christ Child, Jesus, is only heard about in the very infrequent Christmas Carol. Commercial Christmas is the window dressing or framework for a love story. It is not the love of God for us or our love for God though. Christmas is a backdrop for entertainment. The reason for the season is politely ignored.

Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. The sadness of the human condition is that we want to make the rules. We want to establish the boundaries of how God works. Somehow, the infinite, incomprehensible Creator of all things must bow down to our feeble apprehension.

Notice the crown on the Hallmark logo.

Who is Jesus? Have you made Him Lord and Master of your life? Is Jesus your King? Do you know him?

(Dr. S. M. Lockridge video)

CONCLUSION:

Let us always remember that the Cross of Calvary is the destination of the baby Jesus who comes on Christmas morning. Let us always remember that the gloss and glitter lose their shine on Golgotha. Yes, Christmas is a joyous celebration because Jesus is called Emmanuel, God with us.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.