

**WHAT IS TRUE WISDOM?  
Sermon for Pentecost, 2019  
1 Corinthians 2:6-16**

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is 1 Corinthians 2:6-16: <sup>6</sup> **However, we speak wisdom to those who are mature, but not the wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.** <sup>7</sup> **No, we tell about the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom that has been hidden, but that God ordained before the ages for our glory.** <sup>8</sup> **None of those who rule this world has known it. For, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.** <sup>9</sup> **Rather, as Scripture has said, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has comprehended, what God has prepared for those who love Him.”** <sup>10</sup> **Nevertheless, God has revealed it to us through His Spirit. The Spirit searches out all things, even the deep things of God.** <sup>11</sup> **For what human being knows the things that belong to the human being except the human being’s spirit in him? In the same way, no one knows the things that belong to God except the Spirit of God.** <sup>12</sup> **We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who comes from God, so that we may know the things that God has freely given to us.** <sup>13</sup> **We speak about these things in words not taught by human wisdom but in Words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who have the Spirit.** <sup>14</sup> **However, an unspiritual person does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them because they are discerned spiritually.** <sup>15</sup> **The spiritual person judges all things, but he himself is not judged by anyone.** <sup>16</sup> **For “who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?” However, we have the mind of Christ.**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Today, we celebrate a major feast of the church year, Pentecost. Pentecost is the Greek name for the important Jewish observance of the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16) or, as it was also called, the Feast of Weeks (Exodus 34:22). Pentecost means “50th,” for the feast took place 50 days after the Passover Sabbath (Leviticus 23:11, 15-16). Every pious Jew tried to be in Jerusalem for this feast. Those who could not come to Jerusalem observed it in the synagogues throughout the Roman Empire and beyond. Freewill offerings were brought (Deuteronomy 16:9-11).

That Sunday came as it did every year, but there was one Pentecost where God had special events in mind, where what Jesus had promised concerning the Holy Spirit would now take place. At that time, there was a violent blast of wind from heaven, tongues that separated, like flames, resting upon those who were together, and of course, the speaking in tongues.<sup>1</sup> We remember this day as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, leading to the establishment of the Christian Church on earth.

That special outpouring of the Holy Spirit happened once in time, but today we see the Apostle Paul writing in his First Letter to the church at Corinth, of how God Himself calls attention to the precious gift which God the Holy Spirit wishes to bestow upon all men of all ages without distinction. This precious gift is wisdom.

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit Himself, let us discover what kind of wisdom Paul is speaking about.

Paul begins by saying, “<sup>6</sup> **However, we speak wisdom to those who are mature, but not the wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.**”

Paul was not casting any slurs upon the learning of his day, and neither do we of any genuine learning taking place in our day - we thank God for today’s discoveries and achievements. For example, so many diseases that were deadly one hundred years ago, are now curable thanks to new discoveries and achievements. The true wisdom Paul is speaking of here is not of this earth. It has not been, and neither can it be, spun out of the mind of man. This true wisdom is not of this world.

What about from the “**rulers of this age**”?

Here Paul had in mind such men as the Roman governors or the Jewish Sanhedrin. Can wisdom come from them? Paul emphatically says “No!” when he writes: “<sup>8</sup> **None of those who rule this world has known it. For, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**” These leaders were unable to recognise true wisdom, even when it had come to them in bodily form. It was shameful enough that they crucified an innocent Man, a good Man, who all His life went about doing good; but think of it, they crucified the Lord of Glory; they crucified Him who *is* Wisdom incarnate. This was the absolute, ultimate proof that the leaders of Paul’s age did not, would not, and could not know God’s wisdom.

<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:1-4

The wisdom Paul is speaking about is wisdom from God, and it is supernatural. He says, “**we tell about the wisdom of God in a mystery.**” Mystery, in the New Testament use of the word, does not mean some obscure teaching, but a truth once hidden, but now revealed.<sup>2</sup> It is furthermore called “**a wisdom that has been hidden,**” hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed to infants.<sup>3</sup> It was hidden away in the eternal counsel and foreknowledge of God. It was “**ordained before the ages,**” before the beginning of time. This wisdom is meant for “**those who are mature,**” that is, for those who, both young and old, are well grounded in the faith, believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus, “**for our glory,**” who are called to eternal life by Christ Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

What, then, is true wisdom which Paul is speaking about? In summary *it is nothing more than believing and trusting in God’s plan of salvation.*

Every human being is religious. All mankind - even atheists - believes in something. Atheists believe that there is no afterlife, so their religion is to eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow you die! Then there are others of non-Christian faiths who will make sacrifices to unknown gods, in the hope of receiving some kind of reward in the afterlife. There are also those churches who go by the name Christian yet teach that to be saved; you must contribute something. All this is misguided wisdom of the world that places the emphasis of salvation (if indeed they believe in life after death) on man, not God.

Heaven’s wisdom, on the other hand, says that: “*God has already made a sacrifice for you. He has given His only Son to die for you, and you are saved by grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.*” Every religion of the world speaks of man’s quest after God. The religion of heaven speaks of God’s quest after man. This is true wisdom; for it contemplates effectual salvation; it glorifies God and rescues man.

How very precious is this wisdom! When we hear and believe the words that, “*God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them,*” (2 Cor. 5:19), it satisfies both head and heart and illuminates the mystery of our life. Man formed the cross by putting his will in contrast with God’s will; and because he crossed the will of God, Jesus hung upon the cross and effected reconciliation. The cross tells us that man, who is made by God and for God, will find his rest in Jesus.<sup>5</sup> This is the only knowledge that rises to the height of wisdom. This wisdom is to be found in the Lord of Glory, whom the rulers of this world crucified. That is the gift of Pentecost, of the Holy Spirit. We must be sure that we have received this gift, but how exactly is this wisdom imparted?

Certainly not by nature. Paul writes, “<sup>14</sup> **However, an unspiritual person does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him; and he cannot know them because they are discerned spiritually.**”

When Paul speaks of “**an unspiritual person**” he has in mind all those who, so long as they are unspiritual and unregenerate, will turn away from true wisdom with an air of disgust. They have hardened their hearts to the Lord’s teaching. This is what Jesus warned about when He spoke of the unforgivable sin committed against the Holy Spirit,<sup>6</sup> that is, an unyielding refusal to believe the Gospel and a rejection of the Holy Spirit’s work to create faith in Him. To the “**unspiritual person,**” the cross is “**foolishness,**” scandalous. The natural man is an enemy of Christ, of the Cross of Christ.<sup>7</sup>

How, then, is the true wisdom imparted? How can man receive what “**No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has comprehended, what God has prepared for those who love Him**”? The simple answer is: “**God has revealed it to us through His Spirit.**”

This true wisdom is so high that it must proceed from the Eternal Mind; it must be Spirit-given. Paul says that “**The Spirit searches out all things, even the deep things of God.**” He “**searches,**” that means, He knows. The Holy Spirit is more than God’s self-consciousness, more than God’s spirit; He is a separate person, the third person of the Trinity, the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son. The Spirit is the greatest Teacher because He is God. This is explained by an analogy: “<sup>11</sup> **For what human being knows the things that belong to the human being except the human being’s spirit in him?**” No one else can know what is in a man. The depths of a man’s being and thoughts do not lie open to the eyes of others. Others cannot discern his hidden motive, his secret desire. They see only what is outside. By comparison, only God’s Spirit can understand God’s mind. “**In the same way, no one knows the things that belong to God except the Spirit of God.**” No man can probe the depths and discover the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God. His

<sup>2</sup> Romans 16:25; Ephesians 3:4-9; Colossians 1:26; 1 Timothy 3:16.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 11:25

<sup>4</sup> 1 Peter 5:10

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 11:28

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 12:31-32; Mark 3:28-29; Luke 12:10

<sup>7</sup> Philippians 3:18

judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out. Yet to the Spirit, the depths of God are clear; for the Spirit is God. Even as the spirit of man and man are identical, so the Spirit of God and God are one. The Spirit alone, therefore, can fully know and alone is able fully to reveal.

The Spirit teaches us to know the things of God “**so that we may know the things that God has freely given to us.**” The Spirit takes away our spiritual blindness and causes us to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He unveils the glorious mystery. He guides us into all truth. The man who has responded to the operations of the Holy Spirit suddenly loses his opposition to the cross; he sheds his carnal mindedness; he ceases to be an enemy of God and a child of wrath. He realises and believes two sets of three things: One, that sin condemns, the Law is inexorable, and that God is estranged from man; Two, that in Christ sin has been cancelled, the demands of the Law fulfilled, and that God and man are now at one. His understanding is illuminated, and in the light of imparted wisdom, he sees light. The man is born again. He was born once according to the flesh; now, he is born according to the Spirit.

Finally, the Spirit teaches us to speak the things of God. He taught Paul, “<sup>13</sup> **We speak about these things in words not taught by human wisdom but in Words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who have the Spirit.**”

Paul proclaimed the glad tidings of great joy “**not taught by human wisdom but in Words taught by the Spirit.**” He spoke and wrote as the Spirit gave him utterance. Not only his thoughts but also his words were inspired by the Holy Spirit, “**interpreting spiritual things to those who have the Spirit.**” Paul fitted and clothed spiritual truth with Spirit-given words, words suggested by the Spirit, and so interpreted spiritual things to spiritual men, so that we may be made partakers of this heavenly wisdom.

The Holy Spirit continues to teach us through the medium of the Word. The hidden wisdom of God has been revealed to us, first in the Word Incarnate and then in the written Word. The words of Scripture are truth, and they are life.<sup>8</sup>

May we continue to study the words of Scripture, praying that the Spirit will enlighten us, lead us into all truth, and give us that wisdom of which there is none higher. Each time that we hear these words, the Spirit offers us the richest gifts of heavenly wisdom, that is, the knowledge that we are forgiven all our sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

#### PRAYER FOR PENTECOST

Loving heavenly Father, we thank and praise You for pouring out Your Holy Spirit on Your Church as its source of life and strength for ever, and for bringing us to faith in Jesus Christ through Him. By His daily presence and power in our lives, continue to keep us in the true faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ, to equip us for the Master’s service, and to make us ready for every good work. To this end, help us to love and use the Holy Scriptures, so that the Spirit can make us increasingly wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Help us to love our Saviour with our whole being, and to live in cheerful obedience to His commandments. Enable us to reject the ruler of this world, and to follow with pure hearts the things that produce righteousness, faith, love, and peace.

Let the wisdom and renewing power of the Comforter fill Your Church, so that it may be strong in faith, and active in proclaiming in every language the great deeds that You have done for us. As the Spirit touched the apostles with tongues as of fire, fill all Your people with the fire of faith and conviction, love and worship, witness and service.

Make Your Spirit’s influence felt in all our homes. Grant that He may lead all children to live in love and obedience, and give to all parents the spirit of understanding, truth, and love, so that all families may live in godliness and peace.

Rule over the nations of the earth and help them to acknowledge Your sovereign power and final authority, so that all people may turn from their evil ways and live. Strengthen all who are our leaders to be firm in what is right, unyielding in what is good and just, and eager in what is eternally true and valuable, so that Your name may be hallowed in every sphere of life.

Give the peace of Christ to all who face troubles and trials. May Your Spirit help them in their weakness, show them how to pray as they ought, and give them all the resources of Your love and strength.

All these things we pray in the name of Jesus our Saviour, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

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<sup>8</sup> John 6:63

## PENTECOST

Genesis 11:1-9

<sup>1</sup> The whole earth had one language with a common vocabulary. <sup>2</sup> As people journeyed from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. <sup>3</sup> They told one another, "Come! Let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly!"

They had bricks for stones and tar for mortar. <sup>4</sup> Then they said: "Come! Let us build a city for ourselves and a tower with its top in the sky, that we may make a name for ourselves and that we may not be scattered over the surface of the whole earth!"

<sup>5</sup> The LORD came down to see the city and the tower that the sons of men had built. <sup>6</sup> The LORD said: "Look! They are one people. They all have one language, and this is what they are beginning to do. Now nothing that they plan to do will be impossible for them. <sup>7</sup> Come! Let us go down there and confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech!"

<sup>8</sup> So, the LORD scattered them from there all over the earth, and they ceased building the city. <sup>9</sup> This is why it was named "Babel," because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth. From there, the LORD scattered them all over the surface of the whole earth.

Acts 2:1-21

<sup>1</sup> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup> Suddenly a sound like a violent blast of wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup> They saw tongues that separated, like flames, and one rested on each of them. <sup>4</sup> They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability to speak.

<sup>5</sup> Jews who feared God from every nation under heaven were staying in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> When that sound occurred, a crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard the disciples speaking in his own native language. <sup>7</sup> They were astonished and amazed and asked: "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" <sup>8</sup> Then how is it that everyone of us hears in his own native language, <sup>9</sup> Parthians, Medes and Elamites, people living in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and the province of Asia, <sup>10</sup> people living in Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene, visitors from Rome, Jews as well as proselytes, <sup>11</sup> and people from Crete and Arabia? We hear them declaring in our own languages the wonderful works of God."

<sup>12</sup> They were all amazed and puzzled. They asked one another, "What does this mean?" <sup>13</sup> Others sneered: "They are full of new wine."

<sup>14</sup> Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: "Men who are Jews and all of you who are living in Jerusalem, understand this and listen

closely to what I say! <sup>15</sup> These men are not drunk, as you suppose. For it is only nine in the morning. <sup>16</sup> Rather, this is what has been spoken through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup> 'In the last days, God says, "I shall pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams. <sup>18</sup> Indeed, even on My male slaves and female slaves I shall pour out My Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. <sup>19</sup> I shall show wonders in the heaven above and miraculous signs on the earth below: blood, fire and a cloud of smoke. <sup>20</sup> The sun will turn dark, and the moon turn to blood before the coming of the great and splendid day of the Lord, <sup>21</sup> and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'"

John 14:23-31

<sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father will love him, and We shall come to him and make Our home with him. <sup>24</sup> He who does not love Me does not keep My Words. The Word that you hear is not Mine but the Father's, who has sent Me. <sup>25</sup> I have told you these things while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> However, the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything and will remind you of everything that I have told you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I am leaving with you. A peace that is My own I am giving to you. I am not giving it to you as the world gives it. Let not your hearts be troubled or afraid! <sup>28</sup> You have heard Me telling you, 'I am going away and am coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> Now I have told you before it happens, so that, when it happens, you may believe. <sup>30</sup> I shall not say much to you any longer. For the ruler of the world is coming and has no hold on Me. <sup>31</sup> However, the world should realise that I love the Father and that I am doing as the Father has commanded Me! Get up! Let us be going from here!"