

1 Cor 2 Nothing but Jesus

“I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

That’s a bold statement from Paul. Surely it must be an exaggeration. I mean, among the Corinthians with all their issues he’s probably going to need some counseling and conflict resolution skills, not to mention public speaking, a bit of administration would help organize the chaos over there. What are his music talents like for worship?

Yet he doesn’t seem to concerned with these does he? He says I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. He decided this. He decided to put all his administrative and public speaking skills (or lack thereof judging by all the weakness and fear and trembling he was doing) and interpersonal skills aside. And instead gave the Corinthians one thing, the one thing they needed more than anything else, and the one thing Paul was called to share – Jesus Christ and Him Crucified.

And before we go and say what a horrible strategy that is for building up a body of believers – “what about creating authentic places for connection and stewardship and experiential worship and house church small group systems?” – what about them or whatever buzz word you want? Well, lets put it to the test shall we?

In a congregation you obviously have to interact with each other. “Hey Paul this guy voted that way at the meeting on the building committee!” “Hey Paul that person wronged me 10 years ago and owes me some money.” “Hey Paul that person is a little odd, aren’t they?” And what is Paul’s response, “Let me tell you about Jesus and him crucified.”

Is that a relevant answer? It may not seem so. Until you learn about Jesus and him crucified. The death of the spotless son of God. Does it change your priorities? Maybe the meetings aren’t the end of the world. There’s victory over sin and death – why are we dividing ourselves over such mundane things? Does Jesus and him crucified effect the anger and bitterness in our hearts? He covered up a great, great debt that we owe – and we refuse to forgive that person who owes us so much less? Does Jesus and him crucified have anything to say about that person who is different? Did he not die for them too? Is his love, blood red, not poured out for that person too? And you play favorites?

Maybe Jesus Christ and him crucified is, afterall, a relevant answer to our interpersonal issues in the congregation.

But that’s just scratching the surface, no? There are so many other questions we kick around here as the body of Christ. What about the lost? What about us? Who are we? Is there hope for us? What of our sins, or those things that we don’t want

to admit are sins that we still do or struggle with? What about God, who is he?

What's his plan for all the evil in this world? Does he care, is he doing anything?

What about our new business models, what if they fail!?

Paul's answer to all of this, once more: "Jesus and him crucified."

Is that not an answer to all of those questions? And, no I am not being short with you. Does God care for the lost? Well Jesus was crucified for them wasn't he? And he was for you too. Which actually answers two questions. The first is, "am I a sinner?" And if you aren't, or if you could work your way to eternal life on your own, then why did he need to die? But he was crucified. So those things you do, or the world does, are they just "no big deal?" Look at the cross and say, "no big deal." And now that we have maybe begun to see that our sin matters, we might ask, "Well then is there any hope?" And is the answer not exactly the same: Jesus was crucified – so of course there is. Those sins have been paid for, his blood washes you clean. Rejoice you have been made right with God. Which is the answer to another question isn't it? Who is God, and how does he relate to us? Jesus and him crucified. This is a God of love. No vicious and monstrous, cruel God dies for their people. But ours does. God is the One who does what we cannot and pays a debt we deserve.

Jesus and Him Crucified, how many questions might be answered if we were to be mindful of this? Why doesn't God take the cancer away? "Jesus and Him Crucified." Should I stand for the truth even when I am ridiculed for it? "Jesus and him crucified." Do I have to yell at that person who messed up my order? "Jesus and him crucified." Do I need to fear the onset of age, time, and death? "Jesus and Him Crucified." Someone died for you, you are loved, be brave, rejoice in that love, share that love. That answers a whole lot of questions, I think.

Now is this to say there isn't *more* to say? That there aren't complex nuances to many questions that are worthy of being discussed? Certainly. And you will note that this is only chapter 2 of the letter to the Corinthians, the first of two letters! And, of course, he says the same in verse 6 "Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom."

There is much more to be said, and indeed many books have been written about many things that are very worthwhile. And we pastors get up here and drone on and on and oh how priceless that is, right!?

And again, this is something we ought be doing. "To the mature we impart wisdom." Please don't think this sermon is saying "'Jesus loves you' is all you need to know or say." No. It's saying maybe that's a good place to start.

Especially, if you add in, as Paul does: Which Jesus are we talking about? The

crucified One. Make no mistake: You want to grow? You want to be equipped? You want to serve? You want to be salt and light? Seek the wisdom of God found in His Word and his people. Move from milk to meat, grow up, put down roots, stand firm on the rock so you are not battered by the waves. But I dare say that is a different sermon.

This one, is the beautiful simplicity of the Gospel. Someone died for you. Even as that same Gospel offers a depth so profound and vast you could spend lifetimes learning and applying it.

Cherish that simple message. Jesus died for you. A group of people can offer all the self help in the world, they can plumb the depths of philosophy and science, they can speak on and on of the leaders of the world, they can entertain, they can tell a story, they can be captivating. But if you want the answer to good and evil, to life and death, to eternity, to God and his love, for the meaning of life: then don't settle for anything less than Jesus crucified for you.

And he has been. Paul answers their longing for wisdom and lofty speech with a historical reality. A man died, and he died for them, and he rose, Paul knows that – read Chapter 15 if you doubt it. This is the power of God! The power of God to save, people like them, people like us. God be praised for his Work to save through the cross of Jesus. Amen.

