

1 Cor 4: "I'm Scum; Imitate Me!"

Opening Question: If you could be or do anything in the world what would it be?

The Corinthian church were disunited and self obsessed (mainly with impressing others). In this passage Paul strives to break down as many barriers as possible beginning with any wrong view of him that the church may have.

Read 1 Corinthians 4.

Q. How does Paul describe himself and why do you think he describes himself in this way?

Q. What is Paul suggesting that the church received in verse 7?

There is a lot of sarcasm in this chapter, not least in verses 8-10. This is quite interesting when you consider how we usually use the term, "fools for Christ" like that's a good thing when Paul is saying it in a sarcastic (or at best ironic) way. [N.B. if we understand it in the sense of not caring what others think of us then that's fair enough but not at all what Paul's saying here!!]

Q. From verses 8-13, how is Paul differentiating himself (and the Apostles) from the Corinthian church? How would you sum up his argument in these verses?

I'd suggest he's reversing expectations very much like Jesus did on the sermon on the mount and Luke (a travelling companion of Paul's) does in Luke 6 (note especially Luke 6:28 compared to v.12 here).

Q. Why does Paul think the church should imitate him? And in what way should they imitate him?

Clearly Paul is intending on returning to Corinth (v.19) (which he does not long after they receive the letter) and is expecting results (vv.20-21).

Q. How should we apply this teaching to our lives today? What kind of behaviour would Paul expect from the church of Kelowna?

Paul's expectation is for the church to stop thinking so highly of themselves and think of themselves as nothing without the gospel. In fact, the gospel is so powerful (vv19-20) that everything else pales into insignificance. Or to put it another way anything we do pales into insignificance compared to what has already been done.

Final: I said on Sunday that this should be liberating? How is the gospel liberating to those who believe?