

Good morning everyone, my name is Mark Peters and I'm one of the pastors on staff at North Shore Alliance Church. It's great to have you with us this morning, and my prayer is that you will know and experience God's presence among us.

**Intro:** I'm going to continue in our preaching series entitled *Rethinking Church*, and this morning we come to a text that addresses wisdom, the cross, and the Holy Spirit. If you have your Bibles with you this morning let me encourage you to turn with me to 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; if you are using the blue Bibles located directly in front of you, you can find our text on page 1773.

No one likes to be labeled a "beginner," but all us start somewhere, right? In every phase of my own life, I have found myself to be a beginner in at least one or two areas. I can remember the circumstances that led me to begin playing the guitar. I was in my final year of Bible school, and one of my closest friends, who was a brilliant guitar player, was moving away. I'd come to love the sound of the guitar so much, that I decided I needed to start playing myself.

So my friend took me down to Long & McQuade in Regina, and he picked out a guitar that had a rich, beautiful, tone. Learning to play the guitar was both humbling, and physically painful all at the same time; like most beginners, it felt like a complete disaster. I couldn't get my fingers to stretch the way they were supposed to stretch and anytime I played for more than a few minutes, my fingertips felt like they were being cut open. I didn't know anything about music, or chords, or rhythm; I was a beginner in every way.

**(pick up guitar)** But Jeremy began to teach me: he was very patient. I can remember the 1st song he ever taught me to play: *Create In Me*

*a Clean Heart*. I played guitar for a few years, but then gave it up, and eventually gave my guitar away. It's only been in this last year that I returned to playing; I'm a beginner all over again.

All of us are beginners at some stage, and sometimes we return to the "beginner" stage when we fail to persevere...what has been true of my guitar playing is equally true of my snowboarding. When Naomi and I were first married, she skied and I snowboarded, but when Luke was born our skiing and snowboarding went on a hiatus for 7-8 years.

In fact, last winter was the 1st time I've been snowboarding in 8 years. Naomi and I went skiing/snowboarding a little over a week ago, and I felt every bit a beginner. There were a few times last Friday that I pulled some 360s, but I have to admit they were unintentional and nearly gave me a heart attack. At one point, I was ripping down the run, caught an edge, and did an immediate face plant.

As you read through Paul's letter to the Corinthian church, one thing is clear: the Corinthians did not see themselves as "beginners". They were less than impressed with Paul, and his lack of rhetorical ability. They felt they needed someone more advanced, someone better-suited to their own advanced spirituality. Paul saw things differently; this little church was chasing after a "wisdom" that was all about the externals...it had no power to save or transform them.

And so Paul begins vs. 6, using their own buzz-words against them. In essence, Paul says to them, "*So you're hungry for wisdom are you? Well then listen closely, because we do have a message of wisdom for those who are spiritually mature.*"

Please follow along as I read, "**6** *We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7* *No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8* *None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9* *However, as it is written:*

*"What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—the things God has prepared for those who love him—*

**10** *these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.*

*The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11* *For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12* *What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13* *This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.*

**14** *The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.*

**15** *The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, 16* *for,*

*"Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?"*  
*But we have the mind of Christ."*

Before I dig into this text, I want to make note of the fact that in these verses we get our second introduction to the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

Friends, I love the Holy Spirit; I don't know where I'd be in life without His abiding Presence. In fact, one of the reasons I love Paul's letter to the Corinthians is because within these pages, he paints such a rich picture of the Holy Spirit. As we journey through Paul's letter, we will have many opportunities to get to know Him, and His work.

I suspect if we were to take an informal poll this morning, more people would have questions about the Holy Spirit than any other member of the Trinity. Many people within the evangelical church, are comfortable talking about God the Father, and God the Son (Jesus), but they don't know what to think about the Holy Spirit.

Right from the beginning I want to say that we don't need to be nervous about the person and work of the Holy Spirit; He is God, and He is for us just like the Father, just like Jesus. In fact, the Holy Spirit is God's indwelling, empowering Presence. The Holy Spirit has come to make Jesus known, and to lead us into a deeper experience of Jesus' life. So we don't need to be afraid of Him, we can welcome Him, and grow in relationship with Him.

We'll talk more about the Holy Spirit in a little while, but now I'd like to direct your attention to Paul's beginning in vs. 6-10.

**(1) 6–10a: The Wisdom of the Cross, rated "M" for "mature"**

I've entitled this section, "*The Wisdom of the Cross...rated "M" for "mature"*". In these verses, Paul is using the Corinthians' own buzz words ("wisdom" and "maturity"), but he radically redefines them in terms of Jesus and His cross. Paul has a message of wisdom, but only the mature will be able to receive it.

In a gentle way, Paul gives the Corinthians a rebuke in vs. 6. They don't think of themselves as "*beginners*," they see themselves as spiritually advanced, and yet their behavior reveals that they have a long way to go.

- The Corinthians are chasing after what could be described as "glittery"...they want someone to teach them who is eloquent, impressive, and powerful in speech...everything Paul wasn't. They were content to go after a "wisdom" that had form but no substance...
- The Corinthians were content to play the comparison game, elevating themselves above Paul, and one another. Paul was continually having to warn them against spiritual elitism. They thought themselves further ahead, and more mature than they were.
- And because of this elitism, the Corinthians were disrupting relationships and creating conflict within the church.

This kind of behaviour doesn't exactly smack of wisdom or spiritual maturity. All of us know "smart" people who do dumb things...this was the case in Corinth. Here a picture of one of my favourite Far Side Comics (*Midvale School for the Gifted--Pull*)...there is "smarts" and then there is wisdom.

Here's a biblical definition of wisdom, found in James 3:13–17, "*13 If you are wise and understand God's ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying.*

*15 For jealousy and selfishness are not God's kind of wisdom. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic. 16 For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind. 17 But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere."*<sup>1</sup>

The Bible defines wisdom quite differently than most. Typically, we define wisdom as the stockpiling of information and knowledge. Biblically speaking, wisdom results from the marriage between "knowing" and "living". How do we know the one who is truly wise? We know it by looking at their life; the one who is wise, lives her life in alignment with God's life. The Corinthians are claiming "wisdom" and "maturity" but their lives are telling a different story.

What story does my life tell? How about yours? How about our church? When a church is filled with comparison, compromise, and conflict, how are we any different than any other gathering?

In vs. 6, Paul says that the wisdom of this age (the wisdom of the world) is passing away, coming to nothing. The "wisdom" the

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<sup>1</sup> New Living Translation.

Corinthians are pining after, is the same "wisdom" that wrote off Jesus, and His cross, as foolishness.

When we talk about the world's "wisdom," what Paul is talking about are the things people in society value, treasure, and honor...the things that people hold out as worthy of pursuit. Let's take just a moment to consider some of the dominant guiding thoughts of our time.

Worldly Wisdom	The Cross
Get ahead	Lose your life
Self promotion	Glorify God
"I am"	"He Is"

If you look at the last row, these two are alternative ways to perceive reality. And the question is, which of these two will become your fundamental reality? Which ever one we choose will shape everything. Who sits on the throne of your heart? Is it self, or God?

- What do I want? vs. What does He want?
- What will give me pleasure? vs. What will give Him pleasure?
- Where should I go and what should I do? vs. Where is He going and what is He doing?
- How I make a name for myself? vs. How can I make His name great?

<sup>2</sup> New Living Translation.

In vs. 7, Paul says, "we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began."

The storyline of the entire Bible can be summarized in the following four words: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. The first two chapters of Genesis describe the creation of the world, the third chapter describes humanity's fall (their rebellion against God), and the rest of Bible describes God's attempts to redeem, and restore what has been broken by sin.

When Paul talked about the mystery that's been hidden from beginning, but destined for our glory, he was talking about the cross. The cross is the wisdom and power of God, because the death and resurrection of Jesus is God's plan to redeem and restore all that has been broken by sin. In Jesus, the mystery of God's hidden plan of salvation has now been revealed.

And, says Paul, it was destined for our glory **before time began**. Many today would be quick to give Jesus props as a brilliant ethical teacher, but just as quickly, they dismiss his death on the cross as either fiction or tragedy...they marvel at His teaching, but dismiss the wisdom of the cross.

The cross was not a tragic mistake; God had destined the cross for our glory before time began.

- Ephesians 1:4-5 says, "**4** Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. **5** God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family"<sup>2</sup>

- 1 Peter 1:20 says, "[Jesus] *was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*"
- Revelation 13:8 describes Jesus as the Lamb of God who was slain from the creation of the world...the cross was not plan "B," the cross always stood at the centre of God's salvation plan.

**vs. 8** reminds us that the wisdom of the cross can be so easily overlooked, or dismissed as foolishness. Those ruling in the time of Jesus missed the "King of Glory" who was standing right in front of them. They crucified Jesus, the King of Glory, because he was a threat to their values, to their wisdom, to their pursuits.

In **vs. 9**, Paul quotes Isaiah 64...no one can see, hear, or understand what God is up to, unless God acts to reveal it. And in verse 10 we see that just like the Father, and the Son, the Holy Spirit is a part of God's plan of salvation.

## **(2) 10b-13: The Holy Spirit as the Divine Revealer**

In vs. 10-13, Paul describes the Holy Spirit as being the Divine Revealer. You see, God is the God of revelation, especially self-revelation... he loves to make himself known.

- Amos 3:7 says, "*7 Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets.*"
- In John 15:15, Jesus said "*I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*"

In vs. 10, Paul tells us that one aspect of the Holy Spirit's role is to reveal God's plan and purpose to us. In John 14 and 16, Jesus talked about the Holy Spirit as being the Spirit of truth<sup>3</sup>...the One who will make plain all that Jesus said and did.<sup>4</sup> The Spirit will also convict the world with respect to sin, righteousness, and judgement...in other words, He will reveal the way things really are.<sup>5</sup> Jesus also said that the Holy Spirit will He will reveal what He hears, speaking of what is yet to come.<sup>6</sup>

In vs. 11, Paul uses an analogy that made sense in the 1st century and still makes sense today. Just as no one can know my thoughts unless I first reveal them, so too, no one can know the thoughts of God unless the Holy Spirit makes them known. The Holy Spirit is at work, revealing Jesus and His cross as the way to life with God the Father. And as vs. 12 says, the Holy Spirit is at work within us, that we might understand all that God has freely given us through Jesus.

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<sup>3</sup> John 14:17.

<sup>4</sup> John 14:26.

<sup>5</sup> John 16:8-11.

<sup>6</sup> John 16:13-15.

Not only does the Holy Spirit know the thoughts of God, as the One who indwells us, He knows our thoughts perfectly...and that makes him the perfect prayer partner.

Romans 8:26-27 says, "**26** *the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don't know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. 27* And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will."<sup>7</sup>

Do you know that right now, if you have surrendered your life to Jesus, the Holy Spirit is praying within you? Once we get that settled, a few more questions quickly arise. For instance, *what is the Holy Spirit praying for? Is He asking the Father to pour out His love in your life? Is He asking the Father to reveal the lies that we so easily fall for? Is He praying for your future transformation, for a greater measure of anointing, or praying for your perseverance in the faith?*

What is He praying over me? Over you? What is He praying for our families? For our church? What does He see in my past that still hinders me? What do He see in your present that He plans to shape? What does He see in your future that He is guiding you towards?

Who says prayer is boring? Right now the prayers of the Holy Spirit are changing me, and you...His prayers are changing our church and the world. And we are invited to join in His praying... to align with

Him... to be moved by Him. Cultivating friendship with the Holy Spirit is anything but boring...it's more like an adventure. We can trust the Holy Spirit because like God the Father and God the Son, He is for us. *Will you trust Him today?*

**(3) vs. 14-16: The Contrast between those filled with the Holy Spirit, and those without.**

vs. 14-16 make up the remaining section of our text, and in it Paul notes the difference between the person filled with the Holy Spirit, and the one who is not. Now, Paul could list any number of differences, but here he notes just one: *a person without the Spirit is unwilling, and unable to understand God's plan, revealed through Jesus.*

Richard Hayes writes, "the truth about God is revealed not through wisdom but through prophecy, not through rhetoric but by revelation. The 'deep things of God'... [are] now laid bare by the Spirit"<sup>8</sup> No one comes to the Father except through Jesus, and no one comes to Jesus apart from the Holy Spirit's leading and revealing. Not only do we need the Holy Spirit, the world needs Him.

There is a reason why we pray for friends, neighbours, and nations that do not know Jesus...they will not know Him apart from the Spirit's leading. Even while we are sharing the good news of Jesus, we can be praying that the Spirit will make Jesus known to them.

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<sup>7</sup> New Living Translation.

<sup>8</sup> Richard B. Hayes, Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, First Corinthians, 45-46.

Paul ends in vs. 16 by quoting Isaiah 40:13, "*Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?*" The clear answer is "no one"...no one has known the mind of the Lord...there is no one who can instruct Him.

And yet, for those who have been filled with the Holy Spirit, we have a new way of answering Isaiah's question. Since we have been filled with the Spirit, we can say with Paul, "we now have the mind of Christ." We know the plans, purposes, and thoughts of God, at least in part, because the Holy Spirit has revealed them to us...we now see that the cross is the wisdom and power of God.

Friends, because of the Holy Spirit's work within us, we are standing at a new horizon, with a new way of seeing and measuring what really matters. One author writes, "the person who was received God's Spirit has a privileged understanding of reality. In other words, we understand what is going on in the world, but the world cannot understand us."<sup>9</sup>

As I was studying this week, God brought to mind a line from the Spiderman movie. There is one point at which Uncle Ben says to Peter Parker, "*With great power comes great responsibility;*" the same is true of wisdom.

Paul rebukes the Corinthian church because they've been filled with the Holy Spirit, the wisdom of the cross has been revealed, and yet their present behaviour has more in common with darkness than light. And so Paul tells them, "*Be who you already are...Holy Spirit-people...live lives in alignment with God's life.*"

And so I say to you: *Be who you already are...Holy Spirit-people...may His abiding presence mark your life. He has revealed to you the wisdom of the cross, and the folly of pursuing empty things, so stop your meaningless pursuits and turn to Him...He will lead you.*

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<sup>9</sup> Hayes, 46.