

“We learned it from God”

1 Corinthians 2: 1-13

We pick up our sermon series this week where we examine what it exactly means to be Christians cleaned up by Jesus or as Dan Roller shared, our twelve step program for Recovering Christianity. We began this series by stating Step 1 was accepting our identity as God’s Beloved and Step 2 was acknowledging that this change in our names needs to go beyond just a change in our names. It also must include a change in our behaviors.

So today it seems obvious that we will take Step 3 and reading from our text, we can only assume that Step 3 must somehow deal with a change in our way of thinking as the next logical step as we continue the journey.

But before we get to that, I first want to start out this sermon with an apology. No that is not exactly right. More like a confession. This sermon was not high on my list of things to do. Beyond the obvious reasons, I just wasn’t feeling this Scripture. Paul was getting me all confused with his talk about the mind and Spirit and needless to say the commentators were not much help either.

I tried to blame my confusion and lack of inspiration on esoteric language and a too overloaded to do list but on as the week progress, I discovered what the real problem really was. It was me. I was the problem in that instead of embracing

a change in my thinking, I had blocked all attempts to cultivate the “mind of Christ” in my life. Instead of finding peace, I had allowed myself to get sucked up in the stress and worry of the world, forgetting all the lessons and wisdom that the Word of God brings and holds for our lives.

And from the responses to our Theology Tuesday this week, I could tell that I am not alone in this feeling. Lots of us are trying to figure out how to recapture and cultivate this mindfulness of God’s Kingdom in our lives, this wisdom of the mystery of God in our hearts. We are trying to figure out how to have the mind of Christ leading our lives instead of giving our lives over to the stress and worry of the world. And it’s just not church people who having this conversation and wanting to change their way of thinking from stress to peace.

This conversation is happening within our wider culture. People are wanting to change their way of thinking. They are wanting to reclaim their connection to the mysteries of the Universe and develop a deeper sense of peace.

Now, the wider conversation may not necessarily be using the religious language that we the church is using but certainly we are all just saying the same thing. We want to let go of the craziness and find peace so much so that recently Time magazine did a story on the mind revolution that seems to be sweeping

across the name, pitching it with the title: “Finding peace in a stressed-out, digitally dependent culture may just be a matter of thinking differently”.

Sounds great right? No one can fault Time magazine for their sentiment there except that, well, Time included with this title a magazine cover featuring a very blond white woman meditating in peace. And the magazine was surprised when they got backlash from the public.

They received comments that Time was missing the point, that they were promoting an ideal that ignored the real reason why cultivating mindfulness was so important. People were accusing Time of turning practice designed to release stress and find peace into a consumerist activity, that mindfulness was more than just simply closing our eyes and breathing deeply. It is a way to transform lives and open ourselves to limitless possibilities of peace that life can offer.

Now, let me stop right there. I think Time Magazine knew what they were doing when they used that particular image on the front of their magazine. They were hoping to sell a few more magazines and surely that can't be hurt if you stir the pot a bit. But that's not why I'm sharing this story with you today. I'm not looking to start of conversation of whether Time Magazine was right or wrong. I'm sharing this example because as I read some of the comments concerning the great debate surrounding the conversation about cultivating mindfulness and its purpose,

I couldn't help but draw some conclusions that it was the same debate that Paul was having with the group at Corinth over some two thousand years ago. Sure maybe using different words but at the heart of the debate, a want and a need to change a way of thinking so that people would be open to the limitless possibilities of peace that filled their lives.

Paul, as we may remember, was writing to a deeply divided community in Corinth who was also having a debate about turning many practices of faith into consumerist activities. Within the Corinth community, there was a faction that held the understanding that they were smarter than everyone else, that they had achieved enlightenment as it were and that everyone else should just give up because there was no chance that anyone else could ever achieve a high a level of wisdom as they had.

To which we get Paul's response, our text today. Paul says, "Look, what you are saying is impossible. We can never fully know God. We can never completely understand the mysterious of God. It ain't going to happen. We can read the Bible, We can pray every day. We can worship til the cows come home. But we will never fully and completely know God. It is impossible. Our human wisdom can never comprehend the full wisdom of God. And if that is why we are a people of faith, because we want to have all the questions to the mysteries of the world, we want all the answers to the questions that fill our minds, because we want to finally

come to that place in our lives where there are no surprises because we know all the answers, then as Paul says, we are practicing faith in God for the wrong reasons. He even goes to say, if the world leaders, some of the smartest people around, really understand or fully understood God's plan, then they wouldn't have crucified Jesus.

We can never master and completely understand the mysteries of God through perseverance or enough book-learning. That's not how faith in God works.

We are people of faith because somewhere along our journey we had an experience with the Spirit of God that changed our lives, that transformed us, that compelled us to want to know more about this God, that compelled us to want to be in relationship with this God. Not because that one experience made us better people but because that one experience and the other experiences that followed it opened ourselves up to the limitless possibilities of the Kingdom of God in our midst.

True wisdom, true knowledge, true understanding of God comes from just one point, that point that told the world that God loved us so much that God gave us only Son so that we might live. And for Paul, that is all we need to know to begin to understand our God.

In this text, Paul ends the debate and extends us all a little bit of grace. Just because we are Christians, just because we are people of faith, just because we have experienced God's transforming grace and love in our lives, does not mean that we should have all the answers, does not mean that we should know everything there is to know about our God. In fact, the way I read it, Paul tells us that we should be leery of those people who claim to do so.

The grace that Paul gives us is that it is okay to have questions. It is okay to wonder. It is okay to have doubts. It is okay to question. We are human and as humans, our minds can never fully comprehend the mysteries of God.

Where we need to start the conversation at is that we know God loves us so much that God gave God's son so that we might live. And then as we grow, as we mature in faith, we will gain a better understanding of what just exactly this means for us as people of faith. All because we aren't just reading about it in books or hearing about it from someone else.

Instead, we are experiencing God's love and God's grace more and more in our lives each day because we are now more open to the possibilities of God's Kingdom working in our midst.

In our text, Paul is telling us we've been asking the wrong questions and he is inviting us to reframe those questions. We aren't people of faith because

ultimately we are desperately seeking the answers to the questions of life. We are people of faith because we had an experience with the Risen Lord, an experience that changed us, that transformed us, that showed us that there is another way to act, that there is another way to think. Our minds were opened to the way of the Kingdom of God where power and might do not rule, but love and grace, where true peace and joy can be achieved, and where we can become the people that God created us to be.

And all Paul says is that it takes a shift in our way of thinking. Think about what we learned from God. We learned what it feels like to be loved more than we could ever imagine. We learned what it means to know we are God's Beloved. We learned what it feels like to bring forth new life and cultivate hope. We learned what it means to feel grace and have that grace extended to others. We learned from God how to truly cultivate the mind of Christ, to imagine a new creation where there is no more hurt and hate, where there is peace and comfort for all, where the way of the world is not the loudest. We learned from God what it means to be in true authentic relationship with one another as God's very own.

And for Paul that is what really matters. That's the wisdom of God that we should be truly seeking. That's the true knowledge of God that we should be cultivating. We shouldn't be desperately seeking to answer the mysteries of the

universe. As Paul says, we will never know them. Our human minds can never comprehend them.

Our starting point is to know nothing except Jesus Christ. Our starting point is to know that God loved us so much that God gave God's only Son so that we might live. Once we know that, then we truly can begin to understand the wisdom of our God. The cross is our connection to all of God's creation. The cross is our connection to each other. The cross is our connection to cultivating the mind of Christ.

May we never forget what we learned from our God. Amen.