

January 29, 2023

I Corinthians 1:26-31; St. Matthew 5:1-12:

**“We Are . . . .”**

- I. The Foolish.
- II. The Blessed.
- III. That We May Boast.

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I Corinthians 1:26-31; St. Matthew 5:1-12

Dear Friends in Christ,

Augustine is considered one of the great theologians of the early church. His years were 354-430 A.D. Many years ago, I read that as he was dying he begged a friend to paint on the wall opposite his bed the words of Psalm 32:1: "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

The item I read stated, "And the dying Augustine lay there, gazing at those words as the darkness closed in. There will be, dear friend in Christ, nothing else worth clinging to at the last than those words to the repentant sinner."

Our journey this morning takes us through serious conflict for this world. It is a sour note for those impressed with themselves, thinking others should be impressed with them. We're looking at....

## WE ARE . . .

### I. The Foolish.

Our First Corinthians text has made many appearances from this pulpit. Thank God! Here it is once again:

For consider your calling, brothers not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God (I Cor. 1:26-28).

That's the way the world sees God's people: **Foolish!** We Are - the foolish; people who understand the awful consequences of sin, of violating God's Law. In 2000, 23 years ago, Os Guinness wrote his little book, Time For Truth. The subtitle is deserving of thought in a culture being misled and torn apart by this world's wisdom. Here it is: Living Free In A World Of Lies, Hype, and Spin. The following is from page 28:

The wider moral confusion in the West...can be probed best with the help of three terms - "permissive," "transgressive," and "remissive." Fyodor Dostoyevsky captured the first (permissive) a hundred years ago in his famous refrain...: "If God is dead and there is no future life, nothing would be immoral any longer, everything would be permitted." (Os Guinness, Time For Truth, Baker Books, Grand Rapids Michigan, 2000, p.28.)

Here's the statement of greatest importance: "everything would be permitted." This is where human, left to worship of self, lands. If there is no God, if there are no absolutes, if right and wrong are left to the great "whatever," as Dostoyevsky said, "nothing would be immoral...everything would be permitted." Everything except God's Law and Gospel. Guess what? Look where we are? Bad is good. Good (God!) is bad.

Listen to this from God's Word; God's wisdom: "But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death (Prov.8:36)." Need I really list where this has taken this country, this world? We see the lawlessness. We see the violence. We've watched the growth of getting rid of life that gets in the way.

So God says through Paul, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart (I Cor.1:19)." And this: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth...Therefore God gave them up (Rom.1:18,24a,26a,28b)." It's called locking people up in their delusion. It's called, "The party's over." So, who are the foolish?



## II. The Blessed.

And this brings us to our Gospel text, The Beatitudes. Each one begins with "Blessed" - begins with what God has in store for His people. Here we go:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit (those who are humble and lowly because they see what sin is, what it does to others and their relationship with God), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (through forgiveness in Christ)."

"Blessed are those who mourn (who are broken by sin and guilt, and weep from its consequences) for they shall be comforted (forgiven in Christ and loved by God).

"Blessed are the meek (the low and humble because they know who and what they are before God) for they shall inherit the earth (the new heavens and earth after the resurrection of their bodies on The Last Day)."

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (who long to be holy, sinless before God) for they shall be satisfied" (there will be no more sin, or regrets, or falls into frustration, conflict and death).

"Blessed are the merciful (those who are merciful to others) for they shall receive mercy."

"Blessed are the pure in heart (those who are honest about themselves and cling to God's love in Christ) for they shall see God.

"Blessed are the peacemakers those who share the peace of God in Christ) for they (men, women, and children) shall be called sons of God."

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake (persecuted by those who will not tolerate the reality of condemning sin), for theirs is the kingdom of God."

"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil things against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven (that is, unending, uninterrupted, and unfading love, joy and peace) for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (vv.2-12)."

The Beatitudes impress upon us that in spite of the flops and mess-ups of life the love of God in Christ is always there. In spite of how lowly or unimportant we see ourselves, in Christ we are God's children. Our Baptisms have marked us as His. His Word guides and comforts us through this world. It speaks to those who are persecuted for proclaiming forgiveness and eternal peace to others. The Beatitudes direct us to the promise, "For you have been saved by grace through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph. 2:8,9)."

## III. That We May Boast.

The closing two verses from our Epistle lesson read: "And because of him (God) you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord. (I Cor. 1:30,31).'"

Remember, without the miracle of God's intervention and the working of the Holy Spirit through the Word we would never know Jesus. Remember, Jesus the Word made flesh, entered this world, and washed clean our sin-bleeding lives with His blood and granted eternal healing. Remember, we are sanctified, reckoned as holy through faith in Christ. The blood Jesus spilled at Calvary purchased us from the depth and agony of unending hell.

So what about all the bad times, the flops and mess-ups, the times of feeling so very insignificant? What about the sin that dogs us? Well, we are to remember this in our war with sin and the times we feel so very insignificant:

...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may declare the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people...(I Pt.2:9-10).

I'm thinking here of what the Lord had Paul write: "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked...and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Eph. 2:1,2a,3b)." Sad, isn't it, what some sacrifice to make this world their everything; to impress, to be recognized and important to this world? All that, only to discover how meaningless it is at the end.

And there's God's Word - in front of each here - right in our faces - promising to each, "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved (Eph. 2:4,5)." He saved us to be part of His chosen race, His royal priesthood, His holy nation; His possession, not this world's! **WE ARE**...the foolish to this world, but blessed by God's love through Christ; those who can boast forever in the grace and glory of God.

How I pray that God helps you and me to pray, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil. 1:21)." Truly, "Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32:1). God help us to reach out and draw others to this blessing.

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott