

Lent to Easter 2015

Upside uMOI & Inside



Lent 3 — The God Who Hides His Wisdom In A Cross

Focus of Lent to Easter 2015

What does **renewal** look like for those already committed to Christ and his church (CMF)? Committed believers may not so much need a “reset” as **an invitation not to settle**.

God often turns our **expectations** “Upside Down & Inside Out” and calls us to **rethink** what we thought we knew, what we thought we were done with, and to discover more.

It was the “religious” who thought they had arrived and could learn nothing new about God and his plans for them.

So, what God needs from the faithful is **a willingness to be teachable** and to give ourselves to the way of **deep change**.

Paul, 1 Corinthians 1:18-19 NLT

¹⁸ The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. ¹⁹ As the Scriptures say, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and discard the intelligence of the intelligent.” *

* Isaiah 29:14

What is the Message of the Cross?

- **Messiah** Jesus died on a **cross** (Deut 21:22-23) for the sins of the world, offering forgiveness and eternal life
- How did he do that? What makes it so?
- The Messiah Jesus **wins by dying**, not by killing (rebuke of empire & violence, defeat of Satan/evil)
- In dying, Jesus (God) allows the world to do its worst; he experiences death, yet overcomes it in victory
- Jesus' death on a cross, a symbol of suffering, becomes symbol of life & reconciliation, the ultimate symbol of love
- The gospel (euangellion) of the cross is only "good" to those who are willing to believe and experience its power

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.”

Paul, Romans 1:16 NIV

“God has chosen to save the world through the cross, through the shameful and powerless death of the crucified Messiah. If that shocking event is the revelation of the deepest truth about the character of God, then our whole way of seeing the world is turned upside down... all values are transformed... God refuses to play games of power and prestige on human terms.”

Richard B. Hays, 1 Corinthians (pg. 27)
Interpretation commentary

1 Corinthians 1:20-21 NLT

²⁰ So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. ²¹ Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe.

1 Corinthians 1:22-25 NLT

²² It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. ²³ So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense.

²⁴ But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.

1 Corinthians 1:26-30 NLT

²⁶ Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. ²⁷ Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. ²⁸ God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important.

²⁹ As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

³⁰ God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin.

“The biblical theme which Paul is drawing on here is the theme of ‘Wisdom’ [in Proverbs ch. 1-9]... For Paul, Jesus the Messiah is the true wisdom. Having him – or rather, being ‘in him’ – means that you are a genuine human being at last, called to live by God’s wisdom rather than that of the world.”

N.T. Wright, 1 Corinthians (pg. 18)
For Everyone commentary series

Jesus, Matthew 11:25 NIV & MSG

At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

Abruptly Jesus broke into prayer: “Thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You’ve concealed your ways from sophisticates and know-it-alls, but spelled them out clearly to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that’s the way you like to work.”

The Cross-Like Wisdom of God

- Jesus wins (we win) by dying, not by killing
- If you want to save your life, you need to lose it
- You must become like children to enter the Kingdom
- The first are last, the last are first
- Lowly positions are greater than the spotlight
- The meek (humble & gentle) inherit the earth
- The narrow road is the right one, not the Broadway
- Great vessels of God are first found in pastures, prison & mangers, not in palaces and penthouses

Paul, Colossians 2:13-15 NIV

¹³ When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, ¹⁴ having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Paul, Romans 5:18-21 NLT

¹⁸ Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone.

¹⁹ Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

²⁰ God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant. ²¹ So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:18-21 MSG

Here it is in a nutshell: Just as one person did it wrong and got us in all this trouble with sin and death, another person did it right and got us out of it. But more than just getting us out of trouble, he got us into life! One man said no to God and put many people in the wrong; one man said yes to God and put many in the right.

All that passing laws against sin did was produce more lawbreakers. But sin didn't, and doesn't, have a chance in competition with the aggressive forgiveness we call *grace*. When it's sin versus grace, grace wins hands down. All sin can do is threaten us with death, and that's the end of it. Grace, because God is putting everything together again through the Messiah, invites us into life—a life that goes on and on and on, world without end.

Paul, Galatians 5:16-21 NIV

¹⁶ So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:22-25 NIV

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. ²⁴ Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.

Invitation to Embrace God's Wisdom Hidden in the Cross

- If we want to follow Jesus, we must embrace the message of the cross in all of its scandal and offensiveness
- Your hands must be empty to carry the cross; followers of Jesus need to let go of idols and all other hindrances
- While faith doesn't go against reason, it does call us to move beyond it in order to discover God's wisdom
- Law-based living doesn't lead to deeper faith; only learning to live by the Spirit opens us up to "see" the wisdom of God in our life and the life of our church



Upside uMOI & Inside



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