



September 3, 2017  
1 Corinthians 1:17-25  
Pastor Larry Adams

## Remember the Message of the Cross

Hi Everyone. My name is Larry Adams and I want to take a moment to thank you for reading this message. At Golden Hills we are committed to exalting Jesus and preaching the Word. Your downloading of this message is a great encouragement to us, as we know that our ministry is going out to spread God's Word all over the world.

We want you to know, too, that in no way do we intend these messages to be a replacement for your involvement in a good local church, where, sitting under the authority of pastors and other teachers, you can learn to worship, grow and serve and be engaged with a body of believers where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize also, that some of you may be in areas of the world where there is no local church. Therefore, we hope these messages you are using, to gather with your family or other believers, or people from the community that it will be a great encouragement to you, as you hear God speak into your life, helping you to become disciples who are true, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

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If you have your Bible today, I'd like you to turn with me to the book of 1 Corinthians. We're having an associated passage, with the book of Acts that we've been studying together. We have been through the series, *We are Witnesses*, *We are Multiplied*, and we are about to begin *We are Sent*. In this communion today, we are looking at a passage in 1 Corinthians, where we are reminded that we are sent with the message of the cross.

The apostle Paul was writing to this church, that was being somewhat torn apart by their allegiance to certain men. People were bragging and aligning themselves with men: "I was baptized by Apollos; I was baptized by Paul. I was baptized by Peter. Or, I've aligned myself only with Jesus." It was tearing people apart and Paul writes to them and said, are you crazy? Those guys are nothing! Everything is about Jesus. So all of those men were only sent to help you and point you to Jesus, and to remind you of a message of Christ that is to be shared with people everywhere. That's why you are being sent out.

So when Paul wrote to them, he reminded them of the message of the cross. He wrote it in (1:17-25) :

<sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

<sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

<sup>20</sup> Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Let's pray together: *Father, we are witnesses, we are multiplied and we are sent. Sent with a message that is still saving people who believe it. There is no power in human eloquence. There is no power in human wisdom or intelligence. People are not saved because of human wisdom. People are saved by the power of God. It comes through a message that is unlike any other they will ever hear. Foolishness to those who are perishing; the power of God to those who are being saved. As we come to this communion table today, help us to remember the message of the cross that is still saving people who believe it. We'll thank You, in Jesus' name, Amen.*

As devastating and powerful as things have been in the wake of Hurricane Harvey, and in the many prayers and efforts that are being lifted up to help, Hurricane Harvey has dumped more water than perhaps any other (they think), but it is not the most powerful storm. Many meteorologists believe that took place in 1969, in a hurricane named Camille. It was one of the most powerful on record. Billy Graham, in a book called *Storm Warning*, was writing about the approach of that storm in Mississippi. Here is what he wrote:

In Pass Christian, Mississippi, a group of people were preparing to have a hurricane party in the fact of a storm called Camille. Were they ignorant of the dangers? Could they have been overconfident? Did they let their egos and pride influence their decision? We'll never know.

What we do know is that the wind was howling outside the posh Richelieu Apartments when Police Chief Jerry Peralta pulled up sometime after dark. Facing the beach less than 250 feet from the surf, the apartments were directly in the line of danger. A man with a drink in his hand came out on the second-floor balcony and waved. Peralta yelled up, "You all need to clear out of here as quickly as you can. The storm is getting worse." But as others joined the man on the balcony, they just laughed at Peralta's order to leave. "This is my land," one of them yelled back. "If you want me off, you'll have to arrest me."

Peralta didn't arrest anyone, but he wasn't able to persuade them to leave either. He wrote down the names of the next of kin of the twenty or so people who gathered there to party through the storm. They laughed as he took their names. They had been warned, but they had no intention of leaving.

It was 10:15 pm when the front wall of the storm came ashore. Scientists clocked Camille's wind speed at more than 205 miles per hour, the strongest on record. Raindrops hit with the force of bullets, and waves off the Gulf Coast crested between twenty-two and twenty-eight feet high.

News reports later showed that the worst damage came at the little settlement of motels, go-go bars, and gambling houses known as Pass Christian, Mississippi, where some twenty people were killed at a hurricane party in the Richelieu Apartments. Nothing was left of that three-story structure but the foundation; the only survivor was a five-year-old boy found clinging to a mattress the following day.

More than 20 people died in one apartment. They had been given a message that could have saved their lives, but they didn't believe it. It could have saved their lives, but to them it was foolishness. All of them perished.

Some messages are too important to ignore. They are a matter of life and death. The message of the cross is the most important of them all. It's the message we're remembering today at communion. Communion is our remembrance of the death of Jesus, a death He died on a cross. Paul said in 1 Cor 1:18 - <sup>18</sup> "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

The message is literally "the word." The content of the message from God on the importance of Jesus' death on a cross, and what it means for us who believe it, and what it means for those who don't.

The message of the cross, and our response to it, divides all of humanity into two groups, and only two. People are either perishing, or they are being saved. It all depends on their response to the message of the cross. That's what we are remembering today in communion. Communion is our remembrance of the death of Jesus. This meal is a memorial. It's here that we remember that the bread is His body; the cup is His blood. Jesus really died, a real death on a real cross. We are reminded at every communion that eating this meal will not make you a Christian. This will not get you saved. It won't forgive your sins. It won't get you into heaven.

The only way to be saved from what sin has done is by believing the message of the cross: that Jesus died there for our sins, was buried in a tomb, rose again on the third day, conquering sin, death and the grave, and He is alive today, offering hope and forgiveness and eternal life to those who believe and receive Him.

Eating this won't save you. Being good won't do it. Getting baptized is not enough. Reading your Bible and going to church will not get you saved. Jesus saves. And eating this meal today, as Jesus asked, will bring us face to face again with the message of the cross. Communion reminds us of our need to believe the message of the cross.

What is that message? The message is this: there is one eternal God. We are all accountable to Him. Sin is serious. It has eternal consequences. God loves us. He gave His Son to save us. Trusting in Jesus and believing the message, is the only way to be saved.

Paul taught the Corinthians the message of the cross is that there is one eternal God and we are all accountable to Him. He said (vs 18-19)

<sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

We like options. That's why today, a message where there is only one God and one way to God – is not terribly popular. It's too exclusive. People think it is foolish. The fact of the matter is, that is the heart of the message of the cross – that there is only one God. We're all accountable to Him. Throughout history, God has made sure that people understood. There is not a multiplicity of gods. There is polytheism everywhere, but those gods are not true; they are false.

Do you remember 700 years before Christ came in Bethlehem, God spoke to Isaiah a word that was to be sent to a nation that was falling into polytheism. They needed to remember that these gods could

not save them, because there is only one God who can. And we're all accountable to Him, whether we know it or not. Isaiah 43:10-13 – (speaking of Israel)

<sup>10</sup> “You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD,  
“and my servant whom I have chosen,  
so that you may know and believe me  
and understand that I am he.  
Before me no god was formed,  
nor will there be one after me.  
<sup>11</sup> I, even I, am the LORD,  
and apart from me there is no savior.  
<sup>12</sup> I have revealed and saved and proclaimed—  
I, and not some foreign god among you.  
You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “that I am God.  
<sup>13</sup> Yes, and from ancient days I am he.  
No one can deliver out of my hand.  
When I act, who can reverse it?”

He went on to say (Isaiah 45:21-25) –

<sup>21</sup> Declare what is to be, present it—  
let them take counsel together.  
Who foretold this long ago,  
who declared it from the distant past?  
Was it not I, the LORD?  
And there is no God apart from me,  
a righteous God and a Savior;  
there is none but me.

<sup>22</sup> **“Turn to me and be saved,**  
all you ends of the earth;  
for I am God, and there is no other.

<sup>23</sup> By myself I have sworn,  
my mouth has uttered in all integrity  
a word that will not be revoked:

Before me every knee will bow;  
by me every tongue will swear.

<sup>24</sup> They will say of me, ‘In the LORD alone  
are deliverance and strength.’”

All who have raged against him  
will come to him and be put to shame.

<sup>25</sup> But all the descendants of Israel [all those descendants of Abraham – all who have come to  
God by faith, believing]  
will find deliverance in the LORD  
and will make their boast in him.

The message of the cross is that there are not many gods; there is only one. He exists as one God in three persons. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The three-in-one. God said, “I am the savior, there is none but Me. I alone have the power to save.” So “Turn to Me and be saved or you will be lost forever.”

Remember Isaiah 45:23 –

<sup>23</sup> By myself I have sworn,  
my mouth has uttered in all integrity  
a word that will not be revoked:  
Before me every knee will bow;  
by me every tongue will swear.  
<sup>24</sup> They will say of me, ‘In the LORD alone  
are deliverance and strength.’”  
All who have raged against him  
will come to him and be put to shame.  
<sup>25</sup> But all the descendants of Israel  
will find deliverance in the LORD  
and will make their boast in him.

There is one eternal God and we are all accountable to Him. That is the message of the cross. It’s foolishness to those who are perishing, but the power of God to those who are being saved.

The message is also that sin is serious. It has eternal consequences. Paul said (1 Cor 1:18), “<sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

1 Cor 1:21 “<sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.”

I have a very good friend who may be listening to this on live stream. In the last year, he has gone through three life-threatening illnesses. Any one of them could have taken him out. It’s only by God’s grace he is still alive. But he doesn’t believe in Jesus. He does not have Christ in his heart. I love this man. So a couple weeks ago, when I was with him, I said, “Hey, eternity is on your door step. It’s one heartbeat away for all of us. It’s only by God’s grace you’re still here. But you need to be saved. Sin is serious,” I told him. “It has eternal consequences. You can no longer wait. You need to believe the message of the cross.”

Paul said God is still saving people who believe the message of the cross. But what are they saved from? A bad life? A bad marriage? Bad finances? Bad health? No – it’s sin that is the problem. Which is why people think the message is foolish and they are perishing. We need to be saved from sin! Sin is lawlessness. It’s rebellion against God, plain and simple. That rebellion could be active or passive, but all of us have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Paul told the Romans). We inherited this sin nature from Adam. It is that sin nature that causes us to sin – that’s why we are separated from God. The wages of sin is death, Paul told them in Romans 6. That death has spread to everyone because all of us have sinned. This is the message the world doesn’t want you to hear.

Romans 5:12 “<sup>12</sup> Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned.” Death spread to all people because all sinned.

People, God is life! There is no life apart from God. To be separated from God in any way, is the very definition of death. Death is separation. Sin separates us from God. We’re separated from God right now, if we have unforgiven sin in our life. It’s called spiritual death. Someday, we are going to separate from these bodies. It’s called physical death. If we are dead spiritually, when we die physically – we’re

going to be dying eternally. We're going to be eternally separated from God. Sin is serious. It has eternal consequences.

That is the message of the cross. Foolishness to those who are perishing, but the power of God to those who are being saved.

The message of the cross is that God loves us and gave His Son to save us. John 3:16, "<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." God loves us! He gave His Son to die in our place. If you believe that, you have life. If you don't believe that, you perish.

Listen to the message of the cross: 1 John 4:9-10 –

<sup>9</sup> This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. <sup>10</sup> This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Romans 5:6-8 –

<sup>6</sup> You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup> Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Or Peter's words, 1 Peter 3:18a – "<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God."

God loves us. That's why Jesus went to the cross – to bring God glory and to save us! Jesus took our sin upon Himself. He had no sin of His own. He died to pay our penalty and meet the demands of God's just law. The soul that sins, it shall die. The wages of sin is death. Jesus took that death in our place. That's why Paul told the Romans in Romans 6:23, "<sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Eternal death, eternal life. God sent Jesus to save us. That's the message of the cross. It's foolishness to those who are perishing; the power of God to those who are being saved.

**The message of the cross is trusting in Jesus, and believing the message is the only way to be saved.**

Paul said (1 Corinthians 1:19-23a),

<sup>19</sup> For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

<sup>20</sup> Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the

world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified

Paul said there will always be people who claim to be wise, who have degrees coming out their ears, who are intelligent and noted for so many things, they're going to tell you that this whole message is foolishness. They say if you're really wise and intelligent, really smart – you don't believe old wives' tales like this. They have a multitude of alternatives to tell you what life is about. It sounds like this: "You're not sinners, you're good. You have no need of a god or anyone else. And by the way, if there is a heaven, God is good so everybody is going to go there when they die. Beside that, it's not one God, there are many, and many approaches to God. And many religions that can get you there. They are all basically the same... One God? One way? You can't be serious! Intelligent people don't believe that stuff! It's foolishness!"

They offer all kinds of great-sounding alternatives and everyone of them is bankrupt. In fact, God said, quoting from Isaiah 29, I'm going to destroy the wisdom of the wise. He said, I'm going to frustrate the intelligence of the intelligent. That word "frustrate" means I'm going to expose it for the nothing that it is. People aren't going to be saved, he is telling them, by the world's wisdom. The world's wisdom doesn't even know that God is there! Jesus is the only way to God, and God is still saving people who believe the message that the world calls foolishness.

Paul said (1 Cor 1:20-21)

<sup>20</sup> Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

Remember when Thomas, one of the twelve, was at the Last Supper and Jesus said, "I'm going and you know the way." Thomas said, "How can we know the way?" Remember what Jesus told him? John 14:6 – <sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Remember when the Sanhedrin put Peter on trial and asked why he kept preaching in Jesus' name? He told them (Acts 4:12), <sup>12</sup> "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

When the apostle John was confronted in his day, with Gnosticism and so many false doctrines about how people could be saved. He told them, look – you have to decide. Believe man's testimony, or God's testimony. 1 John 5:9-13 –

<sup>9</sup> We accept human testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son. <sup>10</sup> Whoever believes in the Son of God accepts this testimony. Whoever does not believe God has made him out to be a liar, because they have not believed the testimony God has given about his Son. <sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

<sup>13</sup> I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.

That's why, when you share Christ with people and you have been faithful to the message, and you've told them about salvation and sin and what it does, and how Jesus is the only way to be saved – when you are faithful to the message of the cross, you are giving God's testimony. I don't mean in a proud, cocky way at all. But when people tell you, yes, I've heard that, but I don't believe that. You have every right to ask them, "Why are you accusing God of being a liar? This isn't my testimony, this is God's testimony, and you're saying you don't believe Him. The reason you don't believe Him is because you're calling Him a liar."

What does God have to do, to get you to understand that this is the message of the cross? This is His word.

Paul went on to tell the Corinthians (1:22-25) –

<sup>22</sup> Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ["Prove it," is what they're saying.] <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified [that is the proof]: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

It's a stumbling block to Jews. The word is literally a "scandal." A messiah who is God in the flesh? Who dies on a cross? That is scandalous!

It's foolishness to Gentiles. The word is literally "dull, stupid, silly." We're sinners who need to be saved? You want us to believe that this itinerate preacher from Galilee who died a criminal's death on a cross, is the savior of the world? The only way to God? You'd have to be an idiot to believe that! That's the message of the world.

The foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom. In fact, what Paul is writing there, is that the smallest thought of God is greater in wisdom than all the great thoughts of humanity combined. That all the thoughts of the world's greatest thinkers could not compare to the wisdom that God has revealed in the message of the cross.

The weakness of God is stronger than human strength. Paul is telling them – the tiniest act of God is more powerful than all the strength of human effort, combined.

W. Harold Mace, professor of Covenant Theological Seminary wrote a commentary on 1 Corinthians. (Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol 10, pg 195.) He said,

There is more demonstration of God's sovereign power in the dew that falls on the grass and a leaf that unfolds in the Spring, than all the combined efforts of humanity. . . He has complete control and fully accomplishes His purposes, while the power, acts and thoughts of men are in comparison, nothing.

This is the gospel. This is the good news. Next week, Lord willing, in Acts 15, when we begin our series, *We Are Sent*, we're going to see, at the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 – that when people went out from them with a message that wasn't true to the cross, the apostles said, they're not from us. They're not from God. It's a lie. There is only one message: the message of the cross – the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. That's what you need to believe. That's the message of the Christian faith.

It's a message we need to believe, or we perish.

This last week, Karla and I, our daughter Kimie, our son-in-law, Garret, went back to Maine for a family reunion. It was the first one in my family's history that I know of, on my mother's side. 70 people showed up. As we went around and talked, I met people I haven't seen for 50 years. 70 people! There were four, maybe five who have some relationship with God – out of 70! As part of being there at the reunion, I went back to Riverside Cemetery, in a little village in SW Maine. My family is from there. Generations of my family are buried there. My grandparents, my dad and mom, my younger brother. I was standing next to my brother's grave, and it brought back a flood of memories. Good times we had. Many struggles he had. The many times I shared with him, the message of the cross. The many times he rejected it.

Ten years ago in 2007, my brother dropped dead in the street at 51 years of age, from a heart attack. The doctors told me it was so massive, he was probably dead before he hit the ground.

When I was standing next to that headstone, I remembered the time ten years ago I was standing there, getting ready to bury his remains. I was doing his service, preaching the gospel, sharing with my family and friends, surrounding that grave. Most of them don't know the Lord. The looks on their faces when I had to tell them the truth – it was hard for them to hear. But I told them, I love my brother, Gary, but you need to know – he is in Hell today, because he would not believe the message of the cross. That is not my judgment, that is God's word. If my brother could speak to you today, I know exactly what he would tell you: the message of the cross is true! There is one eternal God, and we are all accountable to Him. Sin is serious. It has eternal consequences. God loves us, and gave His Son to save us. Trust in Jesus. Believe the message of the cross. It is the only way to be saved.

It's too late for my little brother, but not for any of you. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but it is the power of God to those who are being saved. Those who are perishing. And those who are being saved. Where are you?

Jesus said, This bread is My body. This cup is My blood. It's given for you. Therefore, whenever you eat it, remember Me, the one who died. The one who came to save you.

*Father, thank You for this reminder today. Paul was dead serious when he wrote this to the Corinthians and there is a seriousness in it for us. If we are here today, and we are not believing the message of the cross, we have everything to fear. We are perishing. But today, as we come to this table, if we have believed that message the world calls foolish, we are being saved. We belong to You and can never lose that. We have life eternal, forever with God. Thank You, God for the hope that's ours and for the message that still is saving people who believe. As we come to this table (Communion) today, God, may we celebrate Your goodness. We'll thank You, in Jesus' Name, Amen.*