

I DECIDED TO KNOW NOTHING AMONG YOU EXCEPT JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED

Sermon for the 5th Sunday after Epiphany, 2026

1 Corinthians 2:1-12

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is our Second Reading from before, 1 Corinthians 2:1-12:

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The Christians living in Corinth had been greatly blessed. Early in his Letter addressed to this congregation, Paul had written, “*I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,* ⁵ *that in every way you were enriched in Him in all speech and all knowledge*” (1 Cor. 1:4-5).

The blessings Jesus had bestowed on them *included being enriched in all their speaking and in all their knowledge*. The Corinthians appear to have valued eloquence and wisdom above anything else. They pursued wisdom as the highest good in life; they were proud of knowledge.

Now the Corinthian Christians, through grace in Christ Jesus, had gained a wisdom greater than anything they had ever known. They had a message to proclaim that was more important than the most eloquent among them had ever delivered. They were truly enriched in all their speaking and knowledge.

What made them wise? What made them effective speakers? Paul puts it this way: “*The testimony about Christ was confirmed among you*” (1 Cor. 1:6). The greatest wisdom they possessed was what Paul had preached to them about Christ as God’s Son and the Saviour of all mankind, which “confirmed” them in faith. A Christian has a certainty that no unbeliever can ever know. This certainty affects all he knows and everything he says.

As a result of such confirmation, the Corinthian believers possessed many gifts. They had all the gifts God gives His believers: wisdom, faith, love, virtue, devotion, patience, and endurance. Even such extraordinary gifts as the working of miracles and speaking in tongues were found in their congregation.

However, in their pursuit of eloquence and wisdom above all else, the Corinthians were now beginning to *hold eloquent speakers in high regard and to idolise them*. The clever speaker, the skilful debater—they not only admired the man who had a way with words, but they were ready to lay out money to hire such a man to teach them rhetoric and eloquence. They wanted their worldly wisdom presented with persuasive language and eloquent diction. Otherwise, they would not value the message.

As a speaker, Paul was almost the opposite—as his own description clearly indicates when he writes, “**And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom.**”

The message is more important than the messenger. Paul, who considered himself “*the least of the apostles*” (1 Cor. 15:9), preached simple, unpretentious sermons and did not try to dazzle his listeners by turning the simple Gospel into impressive wisdom. Although Paul was more than capable of eloquence, being an intelligent and well-educated man, he was not about to woo and win the Corinthians for the Gospel by playing up to their delight in learned presentations and to their love of eloquence. Rather, in his low-key pulpit style, Paul explained that God’s decision to save the world was through

the *lowly message of the cross*, as illustrated by His calling so many lowly people to form the Corinthian congregation.¹

Paul did not mind if, by his opponents' standards, he lacked rhetorical skill²—that did not worry him at all. No, his consistent goal was to present the Gospel mystery in a *simple, sincere, and straightforward manner*, which would commend its truth to everyone's conscience. In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, he wrote that he "*behaved in the world with simplicity and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God*" (1:12).

Paul's message was for his hearers to simply fix their eyes on "**Jesus Christ and Him crucified.**" This is the message they were to concentrate on instead of "**a wisdom of this age**" which is bounded by this life. Worldly wisdom can know nothing of Jesus as the Saviour of the world, or the life to come. It is limited to things of this earth; it cannot know heavenly, spiritual things. The "**wisdom of this age**" is humanism; man is its only god. What man knows and desires is all it has to offer. So, instead of placing their faith in the "**wisdom of men,**" Paul urged them to have faith "**in the power of God**" and wrote, "**among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.**"

Paul had made it clear that God's wisdom is anything but foolishness for those who believe. Rather, he boldly states that it is true wisdom.

The message of the Gospel is true wisdom. The "**mature**" in Christ know that it is wisdom; they have experienced its power and peace. These mature people are not necessarily only adult or advanced Christians. Paul hasn't been talking about two classes of Christians, the well-informed and the beginners. All along, he has been contrasting believers with unbelievers, not adult Christians with immature Christians. Even our children, who have only an elementary understanding of the Gospel, have the highest wisdom when they believe that *Jesus died on the cross for them*. They are among the mature because they have the heart and core of true wisdom.

Even babes in Christ are wiser than this world's leaders. Theirs is a higher wisdom than "**the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age.**" These rulers, these leaders of men, both Jew and Greek, these scholars, these deep thinkers, "**are doomed to pass away**" in spite of all their learning and "wisdom." They don't know the answer to Pilate's question, "*What is truth?*"

The best minds of Paul's day hadn't discovered God's wisdom because it is a "**secret and hidden wisdom.**" They never discovered it, for all their searching, even though "**God decreed before the ages for our glory.**" God's saving wisdom is the oldest wisdom there is; it was there even before time began. Back in the endless reaches of eternity, our gracious God decided that you and I would be saved by faith in His Son. But this amazing fact, this glorious truth, remained a secret until His Spirit opened our minds and hearts to it.

The world's best minds and intellects have made so many astounding discoveries and have filled the libraries of the world, but they have never guessed, they have never dreamt that God so personally, so intimately governs the lives of all the inhabitants of this earth. Paul wrote how "**None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.**"

Who is Paul referring to here? He is referring to Annas, to Caiaphas, to the Jewish Sanhedrin, to Pilate, to Herod, to Judas, to all who, like them, brought about the crucifixion of the Son of God. They would not have crucified God's eternal Son if they had really known who He was. They would not have put Jesus to death as a common criminal if they had known Him to be their God and Messiah, the Lord of glory. They would not have howled for Him to be crucified if they had even an inkling that they were

¹ 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

² 2 Cor. 11:6

thereby urging a sacrifice that would save untold millions of those whom they despised and hated! This was the absolute, the ultimate proof that the leaders of Paul's age did not, would not, could not know God's wisdom. When it comes to understanding God's saving way with sinful man, the world's greatest men are fools—pitiable, wretched fools.

Paul reaches back more than seven hundred years to Isaiah to substantiate what he has just declared. **“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him.”** It never occurred to the mind of man that God does things that way, that He does such wondrous things for those who love Him.

If even the best minds of this world are unable to discover this wisdom, or even to imagine it, how did you and I find it? There is only one answer: **“these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit.”**

Only the Holy Spirit can reveal that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of all mankind. The Spirit can reveal this secret and hidden wisdom because **“the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.”**

Only the omniscient Holy Spirit can know who God is, what God thinks, what He plans, how He governs the affairs of men. Everything that we have in Scripture is knowledge and wisdom that the Holy Spirit has found out for us. Everything we know about our damnation and our salvation has been searched out by Him and, through His holy writers, recorded for us. Our wisdom is Spirit-given.

Truly, no one can grasp God's eternal plan, from the first promise to the final fulfilment and future glory. No one can grasp how God thinks and, so, how He acts—that He acts not in judgment and condemnation, but in mercy and grace, in kindness and love. No one can discover the Good News of salvation. Maybe we try to figure God out, but we fail.

Our struggles can and should turn us from our attempts at spiritual knowledge and insight to looking at the Word. Indeed, by ourselves, we know nothing!

Dear friends, this part of Paul's Letter to the Corinthians reveals the heart of his missionary efforts. More than that, it reveals the living heart of the Church, of the Church's life and identity, and of the Church's mission and proclamation: **“For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”** This is the truth. This is the message. This is the task. This wasn't just for Paul to get right as he wrote to the Corinthian Christians. This is for the Church of all times and all places.

We must talk about Jesus every day. Like Paul, we must be determined to speak to others, proclaiming nothing **“except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”** But Paul doesn't tell us to do this just any old way. The cross must be at the centre of our proclamation, because this is how Jesus Christ is made known. And nothing else matters . . .

. . . or else our sin still matters. And guilt still matters. And shame still matters. And separation from the holy God still matters. And eternal damnation still matters. But because of Jesus' death, as both our Substitute and our sacrifice, now forgiveness matters. Redemption matters. Freedom matters. Restoration matters.

The cross alone—just the one message of Christ crucified—is the never-ending truth that the Church proclaims, that the Christian affirms, and that the Holy Spirit uses to redeem and rescue and restore sinners. With Paul, may we continue to say: **“I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”** Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.