



# Trinity United Methodist Church Newsletter



2084 Wilson Pike · Franklin, TN 37067 · 615.794.2665  
Pastor Dennis Meaker: 615.794.2665 · djmeaker@gmail.com

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## Destroying Wisdom?

*18 For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."*

*20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, 23 but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 NRSV*

God has destroyed human wisdom and substituted a divine wisdom. So says Paul. Are you a little bothered by that? I think it's a fair statement that most of us think that wisdom is a good thing. We want to live our lives wisely; we want our children to conduct their lives wisely; we want to invest our retirement funds wisely. Why does Paul think it's a good thing that God has destroyed human wisdom?

Let's take this apart some and see what Paul is saying. First of all, can we all agree that Wisdom is good? Overall, it is better to be wise than foolish. Note that I didn't say "wise or ignorant" or "wise or stupid." The idea of wisdom as it has developed over the centuries of recorded thought is not usually tied to the idea of intelligence. Someone might be very intelligent but not be wise. Wisdom's opposite trait is foolishness, and that is the contrast that Paul draws.

Wisdom in scripture usually refers to the ability to see the relationships between things and to pattern your life accordingly. Consider: Proverbs 6:6

*<sup>6</sup> Go to the ant, you lazybones; consider its ways, and be wise. <sup>7</sup> Without having any chief or officer or ruler, <sup>8</sup> it prepares its food in summer, and gathers its sustenance in harvest.*

There is a positive relationship with being industrious and self-motivated and survival. The wise person doesn't need to be told to do what must be done for his and his family's welfare. Next, consider Proverbs 11:17:

*Those who are kind reward themselves, but the cruel do themselves harm.*

Kindness to others is a reward in your heart and soul. Cruelty destroys heart and soul of the actor and the victim. Then there is Proverbs 11:29:

*Those who trouble their households will inherit wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise.*

Your legacy is your family. And if you trouble your family, you destroy your legacy, and possibly the legacy of the rest of the family too. Finally, there is Proverbs 2:6

*For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;*

The biblical understanding of wisdom is that it is an integral part of creation. God created these relationships. God is the source of wisdom.

Wisdom, then is not knowledge or intelligence per se. Knowledge is good and intelligence is good. But the ability to perceive how things relate in the world, for good and evil, is the basis of wisdom and wisdom is a creation of God.

With that background, let's see what Paul is talking about to the people of Corinth. Paul is chiding the people of Corinth because they think they have God all figured out. Paul has preached the Gospel to them. He has told them that God so loved the world that he sent Christ to die for our sins. Because of Christ, our sins are forgiven. And, I'm sure, Paul preached to them what Christ taught: we are to treat this world as the Kingdom of God and live our lives accordingly. The wisdom relationship that Paul proclaimed is the love of God freely given being followed by our own love freely given.

Instead, the people of Corinth have gone in another direction. They have decided that, since God forgave our sins, and continues to forgive our sins, it doesn't matter what we do or how we live. God's grace forgives our sins so let's sin and get even more grace from God! I'm reminded of the movie made some years ago about the cheerleader's mother in Texas who murdered the other cheerleaders on her daughter's squad so that her daughter could become the head cheerleader. Holly Hunter played the Mother. At one point there is a conversation between the mother and the daughter about sin and salvation.

The daughter asks, "Mom, does our Church believe in once saved always saved?"  
The Mother responds, "Yes. Your grandparents picked a religion with some guarantees."

Which, I suppose is a good thing if you are going to commit murder.

That is the problem Paul faces in Corinth. They aren't murdering one another, but they are lost in their sin. The people have a once saved, always saved philosophy that they think justifies their doing anything they want. They have used their knowledge and logic to create a false wisdom. A human wisdom. And Paul must convince the Church at Corinth that it's gone astray.

Paul sets the people straight by reminding them that God is the source of true wisdom and that human logic, and the wisdom of this world, can't help them perceive God.

*For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. 1 Corinthians 1:21 NRSV*

Paul is saying that it is not human wisdom, human philosophy, that reveals the nature of God. It is God's self-revelation in the crucified Christ that reveals the nature of God. What God did is foolish by human standards. From the standpoint of the Jews the fact that Jesus died on the cross proved that he wasn't the Messiah. From the standpoint of the worldly wise and logical Greeks it was foolishness to suggest that the Son of God would be allowed to die on a cross. But Paul says that the Wisdom of God is shown in the Gospel that you must accept by faith. You can't reason your way to God's wisdom. You must either accept it or reject it. The wisdom of God is that God so loved us that God sent his son to die for our sins. That was God's wisdom. What we call foolish is the Wisdom of God.

Wisdom is about relationships. The relationship that Paul insists that the people at Corinth make is not the eternal forgiveness of sins, but instead the relationship between receiving God's love and sharing God's love. We have received God's love; we in turn are called to share God's love. Paul spends most of the rest of 1 Corinthians fleshing out this relationship; God's love and our response to that love.

Paul brings his arguments to a conclusion in the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians. Think of this passage as a description of the ultimate Wisdom of God; a description of the proper relationship, the wise relationship, between Christians and the world:

*If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.<sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.<sup>3</sup> If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.*

*<sup>4</sup> Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant<sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;<sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.<sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

*<sup>8</sup> Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.<sup>9</sup> For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part;<sup>10</sup> but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.<sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.<sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.<sup>13</sup> And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.*

#### *1 Corinthians 13*

The world we live in is not a loving place, despite having 2 billion professing Christians. Think how often we encounter that which is boastful, arrogant and rude. How often we encounter that which seems only to want to ridicule and tear down. Think how often we demand that things go our way and refuse to consider that complex problems can be viewed in more than one way. Think how often we, and those around us, demand that things be seen only the way we want them to be seen, and how we attack one another when we disagree. Think how often we are the ones rejecting the wisdom of God's power of love.

In this season of lent, reflect on this statement of God's foolish wisdom in 1 Corinthians 13, God's foolish wisdom of Love. And seek to make that foolishness the wisdom that governs your life.

## 72+U The Mission and Ministry of the Tennessee Conference and Trinity UMC

*After this the Lord appointed [seventy-two] others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. <sup>2</sup> He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Luke 10:1-2*

The mission of the Memphis and Tennessee Conferences of the United Methodist Church is to Discover, Equip, Connect and Send lay and clergy leaders who shape congregations that offer Jesus Christ to a hurting world, one neighborhood at a time. The values underlying this mission are:

Unrelenting love for all people  
Integrity  
Excellence  
Faithfulness and Fruitfulness  
Innovation

Luke 10:1-2 describes the beginning of the first missionary effort of the Disciples of Jesus Christ. Some translations state that Jesus sent forth 70 disciples, others say that he sent forth 72. The Tennessee and Memphis Conferences, under the leadership of Bishop William McAlilly have adopted that scripture as a map for our own mission in our communities. The Bishop has invited us to view our communities as our mission fields, seeking to bring the Gospel to everyone in our communities.

In the coming months I will bring you more information about this mission initiative and how we might be a part of it.

### The Poverty and Justice Bible

*The Poverty & Justice Bible* is a bible that highlights each passage of scripture that deals with the issues of poverty and justice. There are more than 2000 references in scripture to poverty and justice, as opposed to four or five on such controversial subjects as homosexual acts or marriage. Yet many Christians seem to think that helping the poor is a pointless and even harmful act. As an on-going part of this newsletter, I will be providing citations to passages from the Old and New Testaments each week that deal with what scripture tells us about poverty and justice. If you are interested in learning more about *The Poverty & Justice Bible* you can check on Amazon.com or go to [www.Justicebible.org](http://www.Justicebible.org).

<sup>8</sup>*This is what the LORD says:  
I will answer your prayers  
because I have set a time  
when I will help  
by coming to save you.  
I have chosen you  
to take my promise of hope  
to other nations.  
You will rebuild the country*

*from its ruins,  
then people will come  
and settle there.  
<sup>9</sup>You will set prisoners free  
from dark dungeons  
to see the light of day. Isaiah 49:8-9 CEV*

Isaiah is speaking to the People of Israel while they are still in exile in Babylon. He reminds them that they are the Chosen people; chosen for the obligation of carrying God's promise of hope and justice to the nations. The nation that God calls upon the people to create is a nation of Justice that can be a light unto the world.

*<sup>13</sup> You are like salt for everyone on earth. But if salt no longer tastes like salt, how can it make food salty?  
All it is good for is to be thrown out and walked on.*

*<sup>14</sup> You are like light for the whole world. A city built on top of a hill cannot be hidden, <sup>15</sup> and no one would light a lamp and put it under a clay pot. A lamp is placed on a lampstand, where it can give light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> Make your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:13-16 CEV*

Jesus reminds the people of the words of Isaiah. The people of Israel are to be distinct in the world, like salt that flavors a meal. They are to be a light in the world. But what good is salt that cannot be tasted or how can a light shine on the world if it is hidden? We do not establish a "Christian" nation through laws but by how we live our lives. God's plan was always that the people of God would be a living example of what God wishes for the world.

## **Prayer Ministry**

The following persons have agreed to be part of the prayer ministry at Trinity UMC:

Elva Beard	Sarah Jordan	Kenneth Stevens	Judy Richardson
Larry Eastwood	Mac McAfee	Patricia Stevens	Charles Wilson
Leslie Eastwood	Rachel Newman	Sam Richardson	

The members of the prayer ministry of Trinity United Methodist church covenant with one another to pray daily for:

- Those concerns on the prayer list of the Church and for healing of body and spirit for all persons listed;
- For each ministry of the church that each ministry would work to bring the Gospel to those within our community and most especially to bring the Gospel to those who have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- For all the members of the Trinity UMC community that they be led and enabled to live as the Body of Christ;

- For our local community and all its needs, especially for those who are struggling with the burden of poverty;
- For our nation and our world that God help lead the people of the world to live in peace with God's Kingdom.

If you would like to be a part of this ministry (or if you have already spoken to me about it and were inadvertently left off the list) please let me know and I will see that you are added.

### **Up-Coming Sermons**

March 15<sup>th</sup>: Sermon: **God So Loved...** Although many people are fond of quoting John 3:16, do we truly believe in God's Love? My texts are Ephesians 2:1-10 and John 3:14-21.

March 22<sup>nd</sup>: Sermon: **Create in Me A Clean Heart.** Which one of us has a clean heart? The Bible in large part is the story of humanity's unclean heart. The bible tells us that even the most unlikely people are capable of causing great harm. My texts are Psalm 51:1-12 and Jeremiah 31:31-34.

### **Worship Leader's Schedule**

#### **March 15**

Mike Fetting, **Liturgist**  
 Rodger & Cherry Klein, **Greeters**  
 Maurice & Joyce Edwards, **Ushers**

#### **March 22**

Julia Moore, **Liturgist**  
 Hal & Rachel Newman, **Greeters**  
 Larry Eastwood & Linda Robinson, **Ushers**

### **Announcements**

In a few weeks, we will be celebrating Easter. If you would like to honor a friend, family member or honor a loved one in memoriam, please use the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board. The order for lilies must be placed by March 29.

Please mark your calendars for **Saturday, March 14**. The **Administrative Council** meeting will take place at **9:00 AM**. Discussion will include the celebration of our 150<sup>th</sup> birthday. Please plan to attend.

### **March Birthdays**

**Pat Moran, Marty Bauguess, Tom Moore, Jeff McKernan, Herb Haynes, Ava Fetting**

**Happy Birthday to each of you!**