

1 Corinthians 1:22-25

Lent 3; March 7, 2021

I want to have a little quiz this morning. I've got some slogans that I'm going to say and I want to see if you know the name of the company that slogan belongs to.

- "Save Money, Live Better" – Walmart
- "Expect More" – Target
- "Higher Standards, Lower Prices" – Meijers
- "Expect Great Things" – Kohl's

We all have expectations from people in our lives, in the stores that we shop, in the cars that we drive. But what happens when our expectations are the wrong expectations? What happens if we save money at Walmart, but we don't live better? What happens when we expect more and don't get it at Target? What happens when Meijers' high standards don't mean lower prices? What happens when we expect great things from Kohl's and it really isn't any different than anywhere else? We're disappointed aren't we? Yet, even though we may grumble and complain for a while, we all move on in life pretty quickly.

But what happens when we expect more from God and are disappointed? It's not that we don't trust God. We know what God can do. We look at the pages of the Bible and we can see a God who can satisfy the hunger of 5,000 men with 5 little loaves of bread and 2 small fish. We see how Gideon's 300 men took down an army of 135,000. We've seen how a young shepherd can take down a giant with a stone and a slingshot. We marvel at how God took down the walls of Jericho with the voices of Joshua's men. Yet, if we are honest with ourselves, there are days and times in our lives that we expect more from God. We are disappointed and maybe even a little frustrated when we don't see great things in our lives. We want more from God.

The Jews and the Greeks wanted more from God than what Paul was teaching. **"Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles."** The Jewish people desperately wanted the Messiah that had been foretold in the Old Testament. But they wanted him on their terms. At first, things went well. They liked what they were hearing from them. Jesus had crowds that followed him. He performed miracles. They began to think that maybe this Jesus would finally get them out from under Roman world. But then things went south. Instead of being set free from the Romans, he was arrested by the Romans and killed on a cross. Jesus wasn't the kind of Savior they wanted. They wanted a sign, and Jesus gave them a sign – the cross. It just wasn't the sign that they were expecting.

How about you? Have you ever been disappointed with God? You were looking for a sign of God's power in your life, but nothing seems to happen. Ever have to face a big decision you needed to make and you prayed: *"Lord, just give me a sign."* Nothing seems to happen. Whether we realized it or not, Jesus did give you a sign. He gives you a sign that he is with you every day. It's the cross. There on the cross he has taken care of everything that makes this world so bad – sin. He defeated the one who brought sin into this world.

At the cross, we see God taking the place of despised sinners to take down every enemy you have ever been afraid of in your life. Are you scared of death? The cross is now the doorway to heaven. Are you tired? You have a friend ready to carry your burdens even to the very end. Are you unhappy with who this world tells you that you are? The cross gives you a happiness that cannot be found in this world. It is through the cross that we are more than conquerors. It is through the cross we are no longer condemned of our sin.

When the Pharisees were once wanting Jesus to give them a sign to show who he was, Jesus gave them a sign. **"A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."** (Mt. 12:38-41) After three days, Jesus would arise from the tomb. His resurrection is the sign that he is the Lord, and everything he said about your life and his promises are true.

The Greeks, on the other hand, didn't need to be liberated from the Romans, they wanted to be convinced. Corinthian culture valued wisdom where they would turn to logic and reasoning to find their answers for life. So when they heard about a religion based on a Jew nailed to a cross, they thought it was just plain foolishness. What kind of God lets himself be killed on a cross? That makes no sense.

People today can have the same view of the wisdom of the cross. Someone once wrote: *"What sort of God would get angry with the world and people he created and then to calm himself down, demanded the blood of his only son? And why should God forgive us through punishing somebody else? It is worse than illogical, it is insane. If any human behaved like this, we would say they were a monster."* That means that the only way to have a right relationship with God is through the cross. Some might think: *"That's crazy talk, isn't it?"* Yet, that is exactly what the wisdom of God says. Look at what God says about Jesus: **"Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength."**

The message of the cross is simple. As we saw in our first lesson, God has expectations from us. He has set the bar way too high for us. Every day we fall short. God knew that. So, he promised to send his Son to keep every single law perfectly, because he knew we couldn't. We have a God who does so much more than just fix our problems here and now. He defeated the one who creates the problem of sin. Every day you and I have the opportunity to reflect that love of God in the words we speak and the actions that we do. This is the kind of power that the cross has on this world.

When a company chooses a tagline, it is supposed to mean that those words are to convey to you the value of their brand or its products. The words of that tagline are meant to highlight a brand's mission, purpose and culture. These words of the Apostle Paul is much more than just a tagline. It is the center of the Christian's beliefs. May God help us to keep the words of the Apostle Paul in our minds. May his words guide all that we do in this world. For **"we preach Christ crucified!"** For it is there in the cross that we have all we need. Amen.