

1 Corinthians 1:22-25
Lent 3; March 4 & 5, 2018

Did you know that the color of your car says something about you? According to a number of studies, this is what the color of your car says about you¹:

- White – you like to present a fresh, young, modern face to the outside world
- Black – The number one color to show luxury and power
- Silver – Shines bright with innovation
- Gray – It says that the driver doesn't want to stand out
- Red – Projects power, action and flexing your muscles on the road
- Blue – It is a practical, happy color for many. It projects stability and serenity
- Brown – Means you are cheap.

I'm not sure what that says about anyone of us here today. Some people would look at that list and say that's absurd. Yet, sometimes the absurd can say a lot about someone.

Sometimes the absurd things say a lot about our God. God is the one who satisfied the hunger of 5000 men with 5 loaves and 2 fish. He used Gideon's 300 men to take down a well-trained army of 135,000. He took down a giant with a single stone in a skinny sling. He destroyed Jericho's thick walls with nothing but the voices that came from Joshua's men. But, perhaps, the most absurd thing that God ever used was the cross.

To understand how absurd or offensive the cross was to the Jews and the Greeks, we have to understand what they saw when they saw a cross. We see the cross as a badge that we might wear in Jewelry. We see the cross as a great symbol of what Jesus did so that we place it front and center in our churches. To understand how they viewed the cross, I want you to have this picture in our mind. You came walking into church this morning and sitting on top of the altar is an electric chair. How would you feel? What would you think? Angry? Offended? I don't think you would find any comfort in that object. Even though I could stand here and preach about how our God was going to save the world with this horrible instrument, it would be really hard to see the heart of a loving God in such an object. Right?

Yet, that is exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying this morning. **"Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, 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."**

God created a world that was perfect; a world with no sin and death. Then sin and death won. How is God going to defeat that? Where is the **"power of God"** strong enough to defeat Satan, to defeat sin and death? In the cross. When we think of someone having *power*, what do we think? We think of someone who *can* get things done. When you hear the word **"wisdom,"** what do you think? We think of someone who knows *how* to get things done. Someone who is able to figure it out. It's absurd to think of a God who has the power to crush Satan and the wisdom to know how to do that by looking at the cross.

What you see Jesus doing on the cross, doesn't make sense. What you see on the cross is Jesus dying for the unlovable. We see Jesus dying for people who don't deserve it. On the cross you see Jesus substituting himself for the ones who should be on the cross. We should be on that cross. Not God. That's makes no sense to the human mind. To the human mind, that's nuts. Who would do that? What God would do that? If you want to succeed in this world, you go with the movers and shakers of this world. You go with people who can open doors for you. You climb the ladder up. That's how success is measured. Right? You don't climb down the ladder. You don't hang around with all the losers. But that's what Jesus did.

In the verses right after our text, Paul writes: **"Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong."** God

¹ What Your Car Color Says About You By Lora Shinn Published March 05, 2016 Fox Business News.

says to each of us: *I choose you! You say and you do hurtful things, but I still love you! You don't listen to me and you drive me crazy, but I still choose you!* If someone treated us like the way we treat God, you wouldn't still love them. But God does. That is just absurd, if you think about it. Why would a God do that?

That's exactly how the Jews and the Greeks saw Jesus. This wasn't THE GOD that they were looking for. In fact, the cross was offensive to them. Offensive not just because they only saw the cross as an awful instrument of death. They were offended at a God who would do that. To the Greeks, the cross was offensive to reason. A God that dies. Every other *god* they had, lived forever. Why would a God die? Why would a God die for people who were far inferior to him? Why would a God dismiss good deeds and motives as being irrelevant? At the least, if I do something good, it should count as something for god. This kind of God is foolish.

The Jews were waiting for a Messiah that was coming who would be powerful and glorious, not weak and disgraced. The Jews had been taught that the Messiah would remain forever, not die. The Old Testament said that anyone who is hanged on a tree is cursed. They didn't want this Jesus who looked so weak and broken on a cross. The cross was offensive to them.

Instead Paul says: that's the absurd beauty of the Gospel - to the Greeks that kind of wisdom is foolish, to the Jews that kind of Messiah is weak; to those who are being saved, both Jews and Greeks, that is the true wisdom and power of God. The solution to sin is there on the cross. 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.

Whether or not the color of your car says anything about who you are, I don't know. However, I do know what the cross says about our God and about us. We are His children. The cross is the perfect solution for sin from a perfect God. **"For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength."** The price is paid. Salvation is ours. It's given to us as a gift. Now that's true power and wisdom. Amen.