



Poland Presbyterian Church

At the Green since 1802

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**A Sermon by
Dr. Paul Anderson**

“Ordinary to Extraordinary”

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

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. For it is written, ‘I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.’

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? 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. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, in order that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’

In the book 1001, Illustrations that Connect, editors, Craig Brian Larson, and Phyllis Ten Elshof, s, offer their readers some brain teasers. See what you think:

You tell a person that there are 400 billion stars, and they will believe you, but tell that same person not to touch that hot stove and they must touch it.

Why is the ground stuff called hamburger when it is made of beef?

Why do you put suits in garment bags, and garments in suitcases?

Why are there five syllables in the word – monosyllabic?

Why are they called apartments, when their all stuck together? (1001, Illustrations that Connect, editors, Craig Brian Larson, and Phyllis Ten Elshof, General Editors, pp.205-206, illustration #356)

Sometimes, as a people, we are a funny lot and the things we do and say can sound silly, be backwards, or just plain not make sense.

And this concept spills out into our faith life as well.

As Christians, we believe that

- the first shall be last
- Those who wish to lead, must be servants of all,
- And we gain life by losing it

As Christians, we believe that God sent His Only Son to bring eternal life. Jesus is our Lord and King.

But look at how we treated his Kingship

He was, judged by society, as a condemned criminal. A criminal who endured the agony and humiliation of a public execution.

Our Lord

- never carried or earned any money
- He was born in a barn and laid in the feeding trough
- He lived in a town with a bad reputation

As a leader,

- he had no office,
- no headquarters
- and no financial backing.

His associates were

- uneducated laborers,
- political radicals,
- and social outcasts.

The

- influential and elite of society feared and hated him, and the unwanted of society loved him.
- His closest friends lacked conviction and loyalty: One betrayed Him, another denied Him, and the rest, in his time of need, abandoned Him.

The man who came into this world with the praises of angels filling the heavens,
Left this world with shouts of “Crucify Him”! ringing in His ears.

And so at first glance, and to the secular world, Faith in Christ may seem

- Turned around,
- upside-down,
- foolish
- and backwards from everything that makes sense in this world.

It certainly seemed that way to the world in Paul’s time.

Beginning at verse 21 Paul says, “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. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach a crucified Christ.”

The concept of Jesus was backwards or as Paul states foolish. – A loving, compassionate, forgiving Messiah. That’s not what the Jewish person believed or wanted.

They expected that David’s throne would be restored by a powerful, conquering King – one that would eradicate their enemies and restore the Jewish people as God’s chosen ones.

And the icing on the cake was that the Messiah was branded a criminal and executed.

how could that person be a savior?

The Greek population fared no better.

They believed that Jesus did not come close in stature to their mythical Gods.

They wanted their savior to be full of wisdom.

No wise, reputable leader would have allowed themselves to be crucified. That was kind of a deal breaker.

Even today the Good News of Christ seems foolish and backwards.

This notion of our savior being a poor, humble, ordinary person who offers His kingdom to all who have faith.

Merit and being deserving of this gift plays no part in the outcome of our Salvation – Madness!

But to the Christian - the one who keeps Christ in the center of their heart, this makes perfect sense.

And we wouldn’t have it any other way.

We follow one whose life was as exemplary as we can imagine:

- in faithfulness,
- in obedience,
- in compassion
- and in selflessness.

We know that believing in Christ isn’t backwards or foolish.

We know that Christianity can be different from, and contradict the society in which we live.

And in our love for Jesus we know that God gives us all that society cannot.

In God, we find a living Lord who gives

- love,
- forgiveness,
- grace,
- mercy,
- and peace.

I am here to tell you, that in a world where it may seem foolish to believe in God, we Christians no better, and we know better than anyone else that God is nobody's fool.

Everything about our universe,

Our world,

our lives, all are beautifully and wonderfully made.

In his book, "The Message" Eugene Peterson puts the Bible in his own words and translation, at verse 29 of today's scripture Peterson says, "

In Christ, we are given

- Right thinking
- Right living
- A clean slate, And a fresh start.

Nothing backwards or foolish about that.

Let's look at these three concepts. To see what exactly in Christ we are given.

First is right thinking.

When we read the Gospels, we discover the wisdom of Jesus. How many times in scripture do we find the Pharisees

- challenging Jesus,
- trying to out-smart Jesus
- trying to trap Jesus into doing or saying the wrong things

Jesus wisdom was unsurpassed because

- it came from honesty
- It was simple and direct
- It provided a foundation for a relationship with God.

In following Him we gain a wisdom that empowers us to see the truth.

Second, In Christ we are given right living.

St. Paul, in his writings, often uses the word righteousness. For Paul righteousness meant a right relationship with God.

That is what we are given in Christ when we talk about right living.

Having a right relationship with God.

Living the way God intends

- Making conscious decisions to put God first
- Loving our neighbors
- Turning the other cheek
- And doing unto others

You know there is a secret to right living. A full-proof way to live correctly as a child of God.

We engage in right living when we accept that there is nothing we can do for God, we must realize all that God has already done for us.

Finally, in Christ we are given a fresh start, a clean slate.

That is a wonderful thing!

When we sin, and WE DO SIN, in Christ we are always forgiven.

Each time we

- make a mistake,
- hurt someone with our words or actions,
- do something purely for selfish gain,
- fail to tell the truth –
- Whatever the offense,

Jesus gives us

- a clean slate.
- A do over
- An opportunity to put things right

But here is the best part. When we have the right thinking and right living of Christ, we have that presence with us all the time.

So, each day becomes that opportunity to put things right. And hopefully the more we practice at doing the right thing the more we DO THE RIGHT THING!

Right thinking

Right Living

Clean slate

Living in this way is as easy as planting a garden.

GARDENING GOD'S WAY

Plant three rows of peas:
Peace of mind
Peace of heart
Peace of soul

Plant four rows of squash:
Squash gossip
Squash indifference
Squash grumbling
Squash selfishness

Plant four rows of lettuce:
Lettuce be faithful
Lettuce be kind
Lettuce be obedient
Lettuce really love one another

No garden without turnips:
Turnip for meetings
Turnip for service
Turnip to help one another

Water freely with patience and cultivate with love.
There is much fruit in your garden
Because you reap what you sow.

To conclude our garden we must have thyme:
Thyme for God
Thyme for study
Thyme for prayer

And I would like to add

- Time for right thinking
- Time for right living
- Time for a clean slate

Let us pray.

If Anyone wished that poem

I discovered how to plant this garden, in “Swindoll’s Ultimate Book of Illustrations and Quotes”

If you want to find it online type in “Planting Your Spiritual Garden”

There you will find a poem, entitled “Gardening God’s Way” that has been updated by Ally Maddox and Teddi Treybig.

*Sermon printed in “presentation” format

A video link to this sermon as well as past sermons can be found on our website: <http://www.polandpresbyterian.org/sermons.html>