

## 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 - “The Power of Christ Crucified”

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When St. Paul told the Corinthians in our text, *“I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified,”* he was preaching about the damning death of God in Jesus Christ for the eternal life of man. This was certainly not preaching according to man’s wisdom. Man’s wisdom always rests in his work of saving himself instead of God’s work of salvation.

God through Isaiah was talking about this very thing in our OT reading. The people had turned fasting into a way of trying to win God’s favor for themselves. This revealed their lack of faith in God and His way of salvation through His promised Savior—through *“Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”*

That’s one of the things that happens when our faith is in ourselves to get us out of the mess we’re in, rather than in *“Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”* Trusting in ourselves leads to worrying. It also turns the focus of our lives inward to ourselves and our continual needs (which we don’t trust God to provide), instead of outward to the needs of others. When grocery prices go up, one of our first reactions may be to worry about whether or not we will have enough for ourselves? This usually leads to hoarding for ourselves instead of *“[sharing our] bread with the hungry.”*

Let’s now consider *“Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”* An integral part of Jesus being willing to sacrifice His life on the cross was not only His knowledge and faith in His resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven, but also His focus on both the peace of mind His work of salvation would give us in this life, and the eternal blessings in paradise that would come to all who trust in Him.

Something similar happens in our lives when the Spirit of God gives us faith in the Good News that God the Father so loved the world that He gave His only Son to be crucified for our sins. On one hand, the Spirit of God works through *“Jesus Christ and Him crucified”* to humble us—to help us see how foolish it is to think that we can do anything to save ourselves. It took the the combined work of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to save us.

On the other hand, the Spirit of God also works through the Good News of *“Jesus Christ and Him crucified”* to give us faith in Him—in His love and His willingness to sacrifice His life in this world in order to give us eternal life in the next. But before He takes us to our eternal home with Him, He promises to always be with us in this life to help us bear our crosses for the good of others. This is the message that has the power to turn us away from ourselves and our sins in repentance and faith, and turn us to others—to enable us to use God’s gracious gifts for the temporal and eternal good of others.

Let me wrap up this sermon with another important reason God wants us, especially me as your pastor, to focus mainly on “*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*,” rather than on the fruits of our faith in Jesus Christ. I remember going to a church when I was in my early twenties, which focused mainly on the fruits of our faith—on how we are to live our lives once God makes us the salt and light of the world, instead of focusing on “*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*.” When the focus is more on the fruits of our faith, instead of the Giver of our faith, what do you go away with?

Some of you will leave with prideful thoughts of how “*mature*” of a Christian you are because of all the good things you’ve done in support of the Church and for the good of others. Others (like me in my early twenties) will leave with thoughts of how miserable of a Christian you are because of all the things you haven’t done for the Church and others.

Either way, whether you’re proud of your good works, or you feel like you’re a miserable example of a Christian, or a combination of both, we all need to hear over and over again of “*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*,” and of our forgiveness in Him. In addition, Jesus’ resurrection from the dead and His ascension to heaven focuses our attention on our own resurrection and ascension to eternal life with God our Savior in the world to come.

Meditating on the Law and Gospel of “*Jesus Christ and Him crucified*” and risen, reveals most clearly God’s objective truth that “*the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Romans 6:23). It’s this Good News that continues to bring us prideful, miserable sinners back each Sunday to confess our sins and sing praise to our Savior, making us the salt and light of the world, for the good of others.

All glory be to God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

[Children Message] In the beginning God created light in this world through His Word when He said, “*Let there be light.*” We, like Adam and Eve, turn off God’s light in our lives whenever we disobey God. But God still loves us and doesn’t want to leave us in the dark, so He turns His light back on our lives through the promise of a Savior, whose we know as, “*Jesus Christ and Him crucified.*”

Jesus is like this glow stick. How can I make this glow stick glow? By breaking it. That’s how God the Father turns His light back on in our lives, by breaking His Son. If He broke us because of our sins we would stay broken and in the dark, like the dark lead in this pencil. So God the Father sent His Son to become a man in Jesus Christ so that He could be broken in our place—so that He could be crucified on the cross to pay for our sins. But because Jesus is also God and, therefore, more powerful than death, He rose from the dead so that He could be with us here today, along with the Holy Spirit, to give us the light of His life and keep us shining the Good News of His love and salvation to others.