

**Goal: That the hearers would cherish the foolish message of Christ crucified.**

If the world were to come up with its own list of beatitudes, they might sound something like this, *“Blessed are the rich, for they can buy what they want. Blessed are the powerful, for they get what they want. Blessed are winners, for they get all the glory. Blessed are the beautiful for they get all the attention.”* But Jesus comes along and His beatitudes don’t make any sense at all. He turns things upside down when He says, ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”*** (Matthew 5: 3 – 5)

Jesus’ beatitudes seem foolish to the world. I mean, who’d want to be poor in spirit, who wants to mourn, who wants to be meek? In the same way, the preaching of a crucified Christ seems like nonsense to many. Paul sums it up this way, ***“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*** (1 Corinthians 1: 18) Then Paul writes, ***“The weakness of God is stronger than men.”*** (1 Corinthians 1: 25) Now, what does that mean?

We all know the story of David and Goliath, right? Goliath was a nine-foot-tall Philistine battle-tested warrior. David was a youth who looked after sheep. Do you remember the stakes? If Goliath won, God’s people would become slaves of the Philistines. Goliath teased David, ***“Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?”*** (1 Samuel 17:43) But David wasn’t afraid, ***“You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down.”*** (1 Samuel 17: 45 – 46) And with a sling and a stone, David killed Goliath. Now, from a human perspective, there was no way David could’ve beaten Goliath. But God defied the odds and enabled him to kill the giant. God used what was weak to defeat the strong, because that’s the way God does things.

There was another Israelite named Gideon. Gideon had an army of 32,000 men to fight the menacing Midianites, but God had a better plan. He told Gideon, ***“You have too many men! If you win the battle, people will think your soldiers won. I want them to know that I, the LORD God, will win it!”*** So, Gideon, sent home 22,000 soldiers, leaving only 10,000. God then said, ***“You still have too many! People still might misunderstand.”*** So God told Gideon to send home everyone but 300. 300 troops against the mighty Midianites, no one would think they could win. But, the LORD was with Gideon and his army of 300 and they won. ([Judges 7: 19 – 23](#))

Once again, God befuddles human logic and makes the impossible, possible. God uses what is foolish and weak in the eyes of the world to work out His amazing plans. Just think of how foolish it seemed for Sarah to give birth to Isaac when she was barren and 90? How foolish was it for Mary, a virgin, to become a mother, Who was God in the flesh. And think of how foolish it seemed for the dead body of Jesus to rise from the dead, just as he said. (***“Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” He was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.” (John 2: 19 – 22)***) It all seems to like complete foolishness!

Then you look at the cross. The cross is a scandal to the world. From the world’s perspective. The idea that there is victory in death seems insane. This last week the Hawaii House voted for assisted suicide, because they saw death as the ultimate means to end suffering and terminal pain. At death there’s only mourning. No joy. There’s loss, not gain. There’s defeat, not victory. Reasonable logic tells us that death is the final period, in the last chapter, in the book of life. What good is a dead Messiah? Everyone wants a living god who will give you power. Power to defeat your enemies. Power to lift you high above the struggles of this life. Especially, power to live beyond the grave.

On the cross, we see Jesus, completely exposed, weak, and doomed to die. And as He hangs there, the Jews see him as one under the curse of God, for the Scriptures say, ***“Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” (“If a man has committed a crime punishable by death and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him the same day, for a hanged man is cursed by God. You shall not defile your land that the LORD your God is giving you for an inheritance.” (Deuteronomy 21: 22 – 23)*** And the Romans see Jesus as a vile criminal, because only the worst of sort of criminals were crucified. But little do they know that God will, once again, use what is weak and foolish to the world to bring about the greatest victory ever, defeating Satan, sin, and death, and winning the salvation of the world. How do we know that His death is a victory? Because He bewildered the world with the greatest event in all human history, His resurrection!

In the church, we’ve gotten a little sloppy about the event that brought about our salvation. Although we often refer to Christ’s death and resurrection collectively, Scripture clearly assigns Satan’s defeat, death’s death, and the salvation of the world to

our Jesus' death. When He cried out, "***It is finished,***" (*John 19: 30*) all was accomplished. Christ-crucified is the wisdom and power of God in bringing about victory over all our enemies, sin, death, and the Devil.

The world can't understand this, because it sees His death as the end of His existence. His enemies believe that death ends it all. But, the Lamb wins! The Lamb of God arises! "***The foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men.***" In other words, things are upside down in the kingdom of God. In death there is life. In suffering there is glory. In weakness there is power. The fact is we can't climb to heaven, but the Son of God descends from heaven to freely give salvation to the poor in spirit and to the meek in heart.

***"We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles."*** (*1 Corinthians 1: 23*) Yes, a crucified Savior seems utter foolishness to the world. It was foolishness to the world in Paul's day and it still remains so today. But not so for us. The image of Christ crucified is the embodiment of the greatest love the world has ever known.

A young kindergartener proudly wore a shiny cross on a chain around her neck. One day a man commented to her, "*You know that the cross Jesus died on wasn't beautiful like the one you're wearing? It was an ugly, wooden thing. It was dirty and stained with His blood.*" The girl replied, "*I know. But they told me in Sunday school that whatever Jesus touches, he changes.*" ([\*Adapted from LHM devotion\*](#))

When we look at the cross, we don't see foolishness. We see grace and love. Sure, the cross for many was a symbol of folly and shame, but Jesus changes everything. Now, it's the greatest symbol of love. "***For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.***" (*John 3: 16*) Jesus went to the cross willingly and changed, what had been a curse, into a instrument of hope. Whatever Jesus touches, he changes!

We Christians trust that the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and that the weakness of God is stronger than men. We trust in Christ crucified Who is our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. His love fills us, His love completes us, and His cross becomes symbol of our hope and life. Therefore, if we boast of anything, let us boast in the Lord. ("***Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.***" (*1 Corinthians 1: 31*) In the name of Jesus. Amen.