

February 5, 2023 – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

1: 18 - 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.

2: 1-5 - When I came to you, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Acts 17:16-18: 4 - Paul in Athens

17: 16 - While Paul was waiting for (Silas and Timothy) in Athens, he was deeply distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

22 - Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, "Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way.

23 - "For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship

23 - "I found among them an altar with the inscription, 'To an unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you.

27 - "He is not far from each one of us.

28 - "For 'In him we live and move and have our being'; as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we, too, are his offspring.' "

31 - He has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

32-34 - When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed, but others said, "We will hear you again about this." At that point Paul left them. But some of them joined him and became believers, including Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

18: 1-3 - After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they worked together - by trade they were tentmakers.

How fortunate for Paul that he found Aquila and Priscilla and could connect with them. Coming from Athens, where he seems to have felt he had been a failure, he could be encouraged by them.

But also he could encourage them, for they had recently been ordered to leave Rome.

When did you most feel like a failure?

When have you most needed to connect with someone for encouragement?

How did you find that you also could encourage them?

1 Corinthians 2: 6 - Among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish.

7 - But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

8 - None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

13 - We speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.

14 - Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-20

In John 1 Simon Peter and Andrew, possibly John, and Philip and Nathanael first meet Jesus.

In Mark 1 Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John begin following Jesus.

In John 2 - after Jesus turns water into wine - the disciples come to faith in Jesus.

Here in Matthew 5-7 - in the Sermon on the Mount - the disciples learn more about what it means to follow Jesus.

1-2 - When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying.

I believe that the "them" of "he taught them" are the disciples, not the crowds.

The high level of expectations described in these chapters are for the followers of Jesus, not for the crowd.

13 - You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

Salt preserves, creates buoyancy (Dead Sea, Great Salt Lake), and stimulates thirst.

How do we as followers of Jesus do those three things?

14-15 - You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.

The Bible says both - that Jesus is the light of the world (John 9: 5), and we as the followers of Jesus are the light of the world.

Jesus is the source of light; we reflect His light. Cf. sun and moon

"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine."

"Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine."

Hippos/Sussita as the city built on a hill?

16 - Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

As we do good works, we make God look good - not ourselves look good.

Ephesians 2: 8-10 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God - not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

We are God's Show and Tell.