

Trinity: Taught by The Spirit
Sermon 5-14-17
Pastor Curtis Dehmey

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

⁶Yet 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. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"—¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. ¹³And 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. ¹⁴Those 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. ¹⁵Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny. ¹⁶"For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Message:

Some of you may remember the good old Indiana Jones films. In the third Indiana Jones Film, "The Last Crusade," Indiana Jones is on a quest to find the Holy Grail. The cup at the last supper of Christ. It is believed to give eternal life on earth to those who drink from it. In the clip I am about to show, Indiana Jones has followed all the clues and has passed all the trials to get to this place where he must choose the correct cup that is the cup of Christ. Right before this scene, Indiana Jones' adversary, Walter Donovan, chooses the prettiest cup in the room, drinks from the fountain and...dies. He chose poorly...(Play Video) (After Video) Based off this video clip, my friends and I have a running joke. When we make a good choice, we say "You chose wisely." And when we did not choose so well we say, "You chose poorly." For instance, when you choose that exotic choice off the dinner menu and it's terrible, "You chose poorly." Or when you are

driving in a traffic jam and you happen to choose the lane that continues to move and get you to your destination, “You chose wisely.”

In light of our scripture today, I couldn't help but think of this clip. How do you know when you are choosing wisely or choosing poorly? As Paul says in verses 6-8, “⁶Yet 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. ⁷But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” One of the ways that we know that we are choosing wisely is by having this relationship with Jesus. This relationship with Jesus is not just a proclamation of belief. For even demons believe that Jesus is real and true. Wisdom from God comes from this ongoing relationship with Jesus. And one has an ongoing relationship with Jesus by following His example. By studying and reading scripture. By praying. And all these things will give you greater understanding of the will of God. The deeper your relationship goes, the more you understand the wisdom of God.

Now, not everyone around us is going to understand this wisdom. If we are true believing Christians, we are going to make unpopular decisions at times. Decisions that those around us are not going to understand. As Paul says in verse 8, the rulers are not going to understand this wisdom. Otherwise, they would not have crucified Jesus. Or as Paul says in verse 14, “¹⁴Those 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.” Just a quick side note, when Paul talks about those who are “spiritual” in this passage, he is referring to Christians. At this point in time, they did not have the label “Christian.” So he calls those individuals who believe in the salvation in Christ, “spiritual.”

One of the misinterpretations of this passage could be that we are privileged. Or that somehow we have been chosen by God over another. That we have this spiritual superiority because we may be able to access the wisdom of God. As if there are insiders to the “spiritual” or “Christian” club and there are outsiders. “Heathens,” “Secular people,” or “unbelievers.” Even as we interpret this passage and Paul talks about those who understand and those who do not understand. It's not something to gloat about. It's not something to snub our noses at someone else. It's not something to speak proudly and arrogantly of. For God wants all people to come to know his truth and wisdom. Lately, I've been reading a book by John White titled, “When the Spirit Comes with Power.” White acknowledges that there is no privilege for the Holy Spirit's power descending upon a person. He says, “We would be mistaken, however, if we were to suppose that extraordinary experiences mark God's favorites or that they are a sign of spiritual

superiority...The Holy Spirit's anointing is no guarantee of superior spiritual performance." He then references King Saul as an example. The Spirit comes upon King Saul as the first anointed King of Israel. But then the Spirit also comes upon King Saul hardening his heart and eventually leading him to death. So when the Spirit moves or gives us wisdom it is not a sign of our spiritual superiority, but reflects the glory of God. But those who do know of God's wisdom, will do things that may seem strange and out-of-order to those who do not know God's wisdom. Following this wisdom may repel non-believers or it may spark curiosity.

As great as scripture is in guiding our lives. And as much as we love Jesus. How do we know that we are interpreting the scriptures correctly? How do we know that we have this relationship with Jesus? Or there are issues and problems in the 21st century that were not problems in the 1st century. How do we know how to respond to these contemporary problems? Paul gives us some answer to that starting in verse 9, "But, as it is written, 'What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him'—¹⁰these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. ¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God. ¹³And 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." Paul's answer is that we know it by listening to the Spirit. That as we draw closer to God, we see and understand the depths of God. For we can rely on human wisdom, but it will ultimately fail us. I'm sure as many of you know, you can read the same passage of scripture many times and somehow you are able to glean new insight from it each time. Because the Spirit speaks through your current lens or experience and reveals the scripture in new ways. Or maybe God shows you how the scripture can speak to 21st century problems through the work of the Spirit. Or maybe through your prayer time, God reveals an answer. Although, as many of you know, scripture and what you hear from God should not contradict one another.

Paul speaks against this human wisdom. He does it at great length in chapter 1 of 1 Corinthians. So what human wisdom might lead us astray in our day and age? When I think about where ethics and morality is taught to our culture and people, it is mostly taught in pop culture. Movies, Music and Television. Some common sayings today that may lead us astray are ones like, "Do what feels good." Or "Be true to yourself." "Just be you." When we do what feels good it can lead to all sorts of evil. It can lead one to kill in revenge for a broken heart. It can lead one to have multiple sex partners because it feels good. Or to be true to yourself.

What version of myself should I be true to? Should I be true to the person inside me that wants to give up on life at times? Should I be true to the person inside me that wants to throw all caution to the wind and run my life into financial ruin? Should I be true to the person that wants to belittle every person who shows any opposition to what I think? In one sense, I think what these sayings are trying to do is to get us to affirm the God image in us. Who God created us to be in our best form. Yet, these common wisdom and human wisdom sayings leave one very important thing out, God.

But I don't want to lead you into this false dichotomy. That on the one end are the things of God and on the other end are things of the world. One of the things I think we've done wrong in Christianity in the last 100 years is this war between science and faith. Certainly, at times science and faith do not go together. But there are plenty of scientists in the world who are faithful Christians. Even doctors in hospitals will admit that a person's miraculous healing and recovery is only due to a higher power or faith. Sometimes faith and science affirm God's creation. Or science affirms what we already know by our faith in God. God can still use the things of this world to speak to us. For instance, God uses the Persian King, Cyrus, to bring the Israelites back from exile. Cyrus doesn't believe in God, but orchestrates the Israelite return. So faith in Christ and the things of this world do not always need to be in opposition. But there are things that are corrupted by the sin of this world.

So we know that we know the wisdom of God through the Holy Spirit. But how do we know that the Holy Spirit is speaking? How can we corroborate or affirm what we think we see and hear from the Spirit? Because we all know that there are plenty of people in the world who will claim that the Spirit has spoken to them and do things that lead people astray. Homicidal maniacs will say that they have heard from God to kill people. Because of this fear of claiming wrongly that the Spirit is speaking, I think we are Spirit avoidant. And this is one of the reasons that much of the Christian church in America is dead. As Biblical scholar Paul Sampley puts it, "Modern Christians ought to wonder from this why so many make so little over the Spirit and its working in the life of faith and in the community. Many modern Christians are Spirit-poor; Paul and his earliest followers were Spirit-rich. It is fair to suppose that the difference lies not in the Spirit's having disappeared but in modern believers' failure to note, appreciate and cultivate the Spirit's workings..." So because we are afraid of what the Spirit might say, we fail to nurture our hearing to the Spirit's voice. Another reason we fail to hear the Spirit is because we live in America. Even the poorest among us in the U.S. are the richest to those in developing countries. So if relatively speaking, we have everything we need and want, why would we need God? We are all suffering from affluenza. Affluenza is killing our faith in God. When we have incredible medical

advances that can cure diseases that would have once killed people, why would we need God? I'm not saying you need to avoid these medical advances. But that, for many, there is no apparent need to listen to the Spirit or believe in God.

But back to our question, we are listening to the Spirit. We believe God can and will speak to us in this day and age. How can we confirm that God is speaking? Well...in multiple ways. This is in no particular order. The first is having this intimate relationship with God. The closer we get to God, the more familiar we are with his voice. But I have to admit even as I get closer to Jesus, sometimes my human emotions throw off my ability to hear correctly. For many years I would confuse a romantic crush for God saying that I was supposed to be with this particular woman. My hormones clouded my ability to hear from God. The second way of checking is by checking the Spirit speaking with other believers. I remember when I was an intern at Elizabethtown Church of the Brethren. They were trying to get congregational approval to do a sanctuary renovation. One gentleman adamantly spoke up opposing the renovation at great length. After others spoke as well, they took a vote on the matter. The congregation agreed to do the renovation. After the vote, that same gentleman, stood in front of the congregation saying that he was going to support the decision of the congregation. He understood that the Spirit had spoken through the body of believers. So if another can affirm that the Spirit is speaking the same way that you heard, it is more than likely that the Spirit is, indeed, speaking. As Paul says in verses 15 and 16, "¹⁵Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else's scrutiny.¹⁶For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?' But we have the mind of Christ." The third way, is to see if taking the prompted actions of the Spirit produce fruit. This is a more dangerous route because depending on what you think you are hearing, it could have dangerous and unintended ramifications. But sometimes it takes some risk to see if what the Spirit told you is true. And lastly, run it past scripture. If what you heard is in opposition to what you read in scripture. Particularly, Jesus' words. Then it's more than likely that it is not from the Spirit.

The lingering question I have for us, Providence Church, is, "Are we a spirit-rich church or a spirit-poor church?" Are we a spirit-rich church or a spirit-poor church? If we are a spirit-rich people, what evidence do we have that we are such a people? Are we listening for the wisdom of God through the Spirit? The Spirit can speak through all sorts of ways. It can speak through prayer. The Spirit can speak through scripture. The Spirit can speak through the Body of believers. This might be a more daring question, but if we don't see the work of the Spirit in our lives or in the church, do we truly believe in the salvation of Jesus Christ? Where is the Spirit moving? Where is the Spirit teaching you? Have you chosen wisely? Listening for the things of God. Or have you chosen poorly? Listening to

human wisdom. Ignoring the call of Jesus upon your life. If you haven't been listening, there is mercy and grace. If you don't have this evidence of the work of the Spirit, Jesus wants to reconnect with you. Jesus wants to speak into your life through the wisdom of the Spirit. Choose wisely. Amen.