

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Nineteenth Sunday After Trinity, October 11, 2026

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 175, 257:3, 381, 297, 297:6.

Lessons: 2 Chronicles 9:1-8, James 1:2-12, Mathew 12:38-42.

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.

Sermon by Pastor M. H. Eibs

Dear Fellow-redeemed:

The Bible has a great deal to say about wisdom. There are about 225 passages which use the word ***“wisdom.”*** A good number of those passages bring out the difference between God’s wisdom and the wisdom of this world. The Apostle Paul warns against the wisdom of this world when he writes: ***“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”*** Colossians 2:8. A good example of this ***“hollow and deceptive philosophy”*** is the theory that present forms of life evolved from lower forms of life over a period of billions of years. That’s the wisdom of this world. Another example of the world’s wisdom is the teaching of humanism which says that ‘everything in life should contribute to the glory of men rather than the glory of God.’ Humanism wants to do away with the belief that man is sinful. One humanist wrote: “Mankind through the centuries has been obsessed by the concept of sin and morality. ... For many generations we have bowed our necks to the yoke of the conviction of sin. We must work to eradicate this awful mental disorder for all mankind.” (Former president of the World Health Organization, United Nations) That’s the wisdom of this world.

In contrast to this, Paul told the Corinthian Christians: ***“When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”*** 1 Corinthians 2:1-2. The Apostle also added: ***“We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.”*** v. 6

This leads us to consider our text, from which we want to learn that:

**THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD CANNOT MEASURE UP
TO THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS.**

1. The world by its wisdom has failed miserably to give man a saving knowledge of God; and,
2. God, therefore, saves us by what appears to be foolishness - the preaching of Christ Crucified.

Paul asks: ***“Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”*** Let us understand who Paul refers to when he speaks of the ***“wiseman, the scholar, the philosopher.”*** He is speaking of worldly-wise people who have come up with ideas that originated in their own minds. The ideas of humanism: that the concept of sin must be done away with, that there is no such thing as absolute truth, that morality is to be based on the ever-changing moral values of society, this is what we get from worldly-wise people. The ***“scholars”*** Paul mentions are like the Jewish teachers of the Law who always opposed the Lord Jesus. They came with their clever questions designed to trick Jesus into saying something they could hold against him. The Gospel of Matthew tells us: ***“One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’”*** Matthew. 22:35-36. The scholars of our day may be well versed in the world’s literature and up-to-date on all the latest ideas of man’s wisdom, but they reject the Lord’s wisdom in the Bible. The ***“philosophers”*** Paul speaks of are

the worldly-wise men who are skilled in disputing, debating, or arguing various theories. They pride themselves in swaying multitudes of people with their wisdom of words.

What do all these worldly-wise people come up with? What are their ideas? Anthropologists dig up old bones and then give their learned opinion that man came from the apes over a period of millions of years of evolution. These are the men who made the headlines in newspapers with their discoveries. Astronomers study the heavens endlessly in order to find out how this universe came into being. Many of them now accept the theory that the universe came to be in a fireball explosion from 5 to 20 billion years ago. These same worldly-wise people ridicule those of us today who still teach what the Bible says about creation - that this universe was created by God's almighty Word out of nothing in six 24-hour days. They regard us as hopeless old fogies!

Worldly-wise theologians have found a way to deny the Bible teaching of inspiration, Jesus' deity, the virgin birth of Jesus, and many other Gospel truths. Just how far off from the truth the religious cults can get, can be seen from this quotation from the Unification Church (the Moonies): "We, therefore, must realize that Jesus did not come to die on the cross." (Divine Principle, p. 144) (There are even Lutheran churches today which deny the virgin birth of Jesus and his resurrection from the dead.)

What is the end result of this worldly wisdom, whether it be in the secular or religious field? Paul answers: ***"The world through its wisdom did not know him."*** The world by its wisdom has failed miserably to give man a saving knowledge of God. Not one sinner has ever been converted by the teachings of the worldly-wise. Indeed, far from that, it has led man away from God, away from the Bible's truth. In our text Paul asks: ***"Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"*** Paul also quotes from the Book of Isaiah: ***"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."*** (from Isaiah 29:14) Jesus told the wise men among the Jews: ***"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are."*** Matthew 23:15. No one will ever learn the saving truth of God through the wisdom of this world. It takes something else other than worldly wisdom.

We want to learn from our text: God saves us by what appears to be foolishness – the preaching of Christ Crucified.

2.

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."*** There is only one message that gives man a saving knowledge of God - the Gospel of Christ. There is only one message that tells man the truth that he must hear and believe in order to be saved. That is the message of the cross.

The necessity of this message lies in the fact of man's sinfulness. The real problem of all people is that they are sinners. This is what has caused all the troubles in the world. God says: ***"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*** Romans 3:23. Also in the 3rd chapter of Romans this truth is emphasized: ***"that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. As it is written: 'There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless.'" v. 9-12***

Man thinks he can solve this problem of sin by his imperfect attempt at keeping God's commandments. But the Bible says: ***"No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin."*** Romans 3:20. So again, man's wisdom has failed miserably in solving the problem of being saved.

God's way is through the ***"foolishness"*** of preaching the Gospel of Christ Crucified. Paul explains in our text: ***"For 'the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.'" Paul continues: "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles."*** The Jews considered the message of the cross foolishness. They would not accept a Messiah who would not be a great earthly king and rescue them from the Romans who ruled over them. To believe in a Messiah who humbled himself to the death on the cross was like a stumbling block to them, something in the way of their progress. To the Gentiles the preaching of the crucified Savior was just plain foolishness. According to their way of reasoning, it was silly to believe that a man put to death on a cross as a criminal could save them.

But it is just this message, which is considered foolishness by those who do not believe, that is the power of God for man's salvation. Our text says: ***"The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God."*** So Paul told the Roman believers: ***"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."*** Romans 1:16. The Gospel of Christ is the power of God to convert the sinner. Peter says: ***"You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ... And this is the word that was preached to you."*** 1 Peter 1:23.25.

The Gospel of Christ Crucified is also God's wisdom, God's wise way of saving mankind. Paul says: ***"We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength."*** All of man's attempts to find salvation were absolute failures, but the wisdom of God was successful. What seems so foolish and weak according to man's way of thinking, the redemption of the world through the death of his Son on the cross, that is the truly wise way that results in salvation for all who by God's grace believe the message.

Consider the results of the preaching of the cross: 3,000 people on Pentecost believed and were baptized. ***"And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."*** Acts 2:47. Even in great persecution: ***"Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went,"*** (Acts 8:4) and the Church grew mightily. Through all the days of the Apostles many people were brought to faith through the preaching of Christ the crucified and risen Savior. When the Gospel had been lost in the days when the Roman Catholic Church reigned supreme, Martin Luther by God's grace restored it to the Church. Millions of people have been heirs of the Reformation and learned to know their Savior through the preaching of the cross. Still today it is the only effective message of salvation. We're not talking about outward church membership. Any old message can build up a large membership. But only the Gospel of Christ can create faith in the Savior and add people to the membership of the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints.

For our joy and confidence in spreading this Word in the future, let us remember God's promise concerning his Word: ***"It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."*** Isaiah 55:11 This is the truth we confess in these words of the hymnwriter:

"It is the pow'r of God to save
From sin and Satan and the grave;
It works the faith, which firmly clings
To all the treasures which it brings." Amen.

(The Lutheran Hymnal 297:4)

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