



## BELLVILLE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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# The Power of the cross is foolishness to the world

## 1 Corinthians 1:18 – 31

~ Brent Russell ~

- Paul writes to the church in **Corinth**
- A **young** church a **divided** church and a church that needs some setting on the right path
- Paul was an **old man**
- **not the worlds greatest preacher**
- He was a **great writer**
- He was able to put down on paper great ideas and truths about God
- Paul's preaching was in fact so bad that **one night he preached so long** and so boringly that a young man fell out of a window and died
- Paul ran outside and raised him back to life and carried on preaching!
  
- By all extents **Paul was nothing much in the worlds eyes**
- He was elderly, talk endlessly he did not seem all that great
- But Paul was endlessly **aware of his on inadequacies**
- He was aware of his **dependence on Jesus**
- But he preached a message of power and I want us to look at this message today

### *Read 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31*

- I really want us to look at vs 22
- ' **The Jews demanded miraculous signs, the Greeks wanted wisdom but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles'**
- **People followed Jesus** wherever he went
- And each person had there **own motives**

- People came to Jesus **looking for various things**
- **Just as people came to Jesus then so people come to church now**
- **We all come to the church to find something**
- To **meet some need** that we have in our lives
- Why have you come to church today - what are you looking for?

### **The Jews demanded miraculous signs**

- The Jews came to Jesus looking for **miracles**
- The Jews had been waiting for a long time for the **promised messiah**
- They were expecting some great **political leader**
- **A secular king**
- They may have been expecting a **warrior**
- someone who could lead a war and protect the Jewish people against the oppression that they had always faced
- To put in our context they were expecting a **Nelson Mandela**
- **They wanted some great and miraculous leader**
  
- **But Jesus was not at all what they had expected**
- He was not this great powerful man that they were expecting
  
- Some people come to church **seeking the miraculous**
- Certainly if you watch some of the preachers on the **Christian satellite channel** that is what they are promised
- There are preachers who tell us that unless we are financially well off we have not been blessed by God
- There are those that tell us that if we are not healed of our illness then we have no faith
- **So people come seeking miracles from Jesus**
- **They seek financial blessing**
- **They seek material wealth**
- **They seek health**
- In **Matthews Gospel** we find some **Pharisees** coming to Jesus looking for miracles
- **But he berates them 'An evil and wicked generation wants miracles'**

- **Did Jesus do miracles - sure**
- **Does Jesus still do miracles all the time? - He certainly does**
- So what is Paul on about here?
- There are **some who believe that the center of Jesus ministry was miracles**
- And whilst he certainly did and still does do them they were not what defined his ministry
- **Jesus never organized great healing crusades**
- **Many times he healed only one or two people**
- **Whilst miracles were part of Jesus ministry they were not always used and where people expected them as proof Jesus was not interested**

#### The Greeks came looking for wisdom

- The Greeks were one of the most **intellectual nations** of the time
- They were the **leaders in all forms of Philosophy**
- **Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, the cynics and the stoics**
- All great philosophers or groups of philosophers who were influenced by and themselves influenced by *Greek philosophy*
- They were the **thinkers**
- **They loved complex arguments and explanations for the things they saw around them**
  
- Like the *Greeks* many come to Jesus looking for **intellectual wisdom**
- **They want nice academic explanations for things**
- **They want it all and black and white**
- **But we serve a God who loves to do things out of the ordinary**
- **We serve a God who defies rational explanation**
  
- **For some people the message of Jesus makes no intellectual sense to them at all**
- They are looking for the fancy things of this world
- **Great compelling arguments**
- **Big words big promises**
- **They want all the answers**
- **They will be disappointed because that is not the message of the cross**

- **For others their only way they know Jesus is intellectually**
- Perhaps they have great knowledge of the scriptures
- They may know great theological truths
- **But like the Greeks they are more interested in the intellectual exercise of knowing Jesus**
- **To know about Jesus is not enough**
- **We need to trust Jesus, believe IN him**
  
- People expect a Jesus that is like the world's great leaders or cult figures
- They seek a person who is famous and flashy
- They seek a person who by the world's standards is a success
- But that is not who Jesus is
- **Paul tells the church in Corinth and us too that the message of the cross is something different**

**We preach Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Greeks**

- **The message of the cross has always been something of an enigma to the world**
- **And whilst the truth of the cross is preached it should always be an enigma**
  
- You see the message of the cross is not about miracles like the Jews sought
- It is **not about intellectual arguments** that would have satisfied the Greeks
- The message of the cross to the world seems ridiculous
- It seems foolish
- **It does not make sense to a worldly mind**
  
- **The message of the cross, writes Paul, is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those being saved it is the power of God**
- **The message of the cross is opposed to ALL that the world stands for**
  
- The Jews expected a great leader
- A man of noble birth
- A king

- A warrior
- **But instead they got the equivalent of Pietie from pofadder**
- A nobody from nowhere
- **...'Nazareth can anything good come from Nazareth'**
  
- **The people ridiculed Jesus as he hung on the cross**
- **Surely if he is the Son of God let him save himself**
  
- **Jesus was not what they expected**
- **For the world the cross was a shameful moment**
- In the worlds eyes it was a moment of **absolute weakness**
- It was a moment of **defeat**
- It was a moment of **failure**
  
- **If we are to respond to Jesus we need to meet him at the cross**
- **We are to respond to the message of the cross that Paul talks about**
  
- **We need to meet Jesus there day by day**
  
- We have to **get rid of some things** when we come to the cross
- **Because only when we come daily to the cross with that kind of an attitude can we receive what Jesus offers us**
- **Forgiveness, life eternal**
  
- You may recall the story **about the young ruler who comes to Jesus**
- Let me put it into context
- **It's like a young yuppie coming to Jesus**
- He is the manager of a company, Rakes in good money, He drives a BMW
- Has the pretty wife
- And by all intents and purposes he has attained all the earth seems to hold as important
- He says that he has always been honest good, and treated people well
- Then Jesus tells him he must give up all he has to come follow Him
- And the young man walks away saddened

- **The message of the cross opposes all that the world holds as important**
- **At the cross we don't find human strength we find weakness**
- **Instead of greed we find generosity**
- **Instead of selfishness we find sacrifice**
- **Instead of vengeance we find mercy**
- **Instead of pride we find humility**
- **Everything that is seen as weak by the world is what we find in the message of the cross**

### **CONCLUSION**

- **The cross is where weak people come**
- **The cross is a place for those who know that they have done wrong**
- **The cross is a place where the worlds wisdom, success, wealth and status count absolutely nothing for you**
  
- **Paul's message of the cross is that we can come to a God who loves us**
- **A God who accepts us for what we are**
- **But a God who expects asks us to put aside all that the world thinks is important**
- **A God who asks us to put aside all our status and importance**
- **A God who promises to give us all we need**
- **A God who died so that we may have life everlasting**
  
- **The message of the cross is that We need to become nothing so that we can gain everything**