MESSY GRACE: **1 Cor wk 2 – Keep it Simple Stupid**

**If you’re thinking about being a Christian - a lot of people are going to think - “Man, that’s just crazy.” They are silly and weird – and boring!**

**The result is the tendency to try to be cool – to not let anyone think you are weird, but hip and smart. So, you compromise.**

**That is what is happening in Corinth - A young urban church, in a hip and wild city - struggling between being cool and being w/ Christ - with what others thought and what God thought. Maybe that is you today.**

**Some of you are resisting becoming Christians just by the fact that you don’t want everybody to think you’re a total freak. So, you’re trying to find a way to go to Heaven & still be chill? Is it possible?**

**WELCOME TO CORINTH**

**Written by the Apostle Paul to a church he planted 5 yrs earlier. He lived there1 ½ yrs. He knew that city and the people well (Acts 18:1-18)**

**He wrote them 4 times – we have only 2**

**Corinth was the original sin city – Vegas of the ancent world.**

**Cosmopolitan sea port and entertainment city. people would come party and leave. Town mascot, goddess of sex (Aphrodite - Venus)**

**A messed-up church in a messed-up city learning to walk w/ God**

**This letter is all over the map. Arguing, suing, rampant immorality, drunk at church events, misuse of spiritual gifts, ignoring sin, incest, they were progressive and proud of it... But Paul addresses each issue – with grace.**

**After he loves on them – he lovingly lays into them.**

**The first issue Paul begins to deal with is – they were incredibly divided – last week the plea for unity and why it’s important.**

**This week Paul lays out the unifying factor of our faith – the cross**

**1 Corinthians 1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel (As important as being baptized is, that is not the message that saves – it is the good news of the Cross) - not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.**

**Our message is not a formula, format, or fashion – it is not a method – but a message. Don’t get distracted by the approach**

**Stick to the gospel! That is where the power is!**

* **The Cross is a simple message**

**We over complicate it sometimes – I know I do.**

**What is that message? What is that good news? Simple: THE CROSS!**

**The message: God is holy, we are not. Unless there is a way of escape, we will face God’s judgment. Good News, The cross is that way.**

**God demonstrated his holiness, his wrath, his mercy, his love, his grace – all with three nails and some wood – THE CROSS.**

**It is where God conquered Satan, sin, death, hell, demons, difficulties, and reconciled us back to Himself - The resurrection sealed it!!!**

**The simplicity of the gospel it is a hard message.**

**The Cross – So simple! John 3:16**

* **The Cross is an offensive message – this was repulsive to them**

**To understand how strange & offensive this would have been - Imagine person next to you (mushroom cloud earrings) celebrating bomb at Hiroshima. Or the entrance to your work parking lot (Auschwitz gate) “to work brings freedom”. Or your child – “check out my new tattoo” (electric chair) promote the death penalty, or a necklace (hypodermic needle) to celebrate lethal injection.**

**You would think that was crazy, weird, offensive, inappropriate**

**That is what Rome would have thought when Christians would have talked about and celebrated the cross. The cross was a symbol of death - vile - for the worst of the worst. Not to talk of it – Embarrassed.**

**One of my favorite verses – 1 Cor 1:18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, (lost and judged) but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (a few things about that verse)**

**Jesus is foolish, even to some of you here. You know why? You’re perishing. Makes no sense, a cross? Why can’t He just declare it?**

* **The Cross is a foolish message**

**When Paul says “foolish” he is saying it tongue and check in the perspective of a non-Christian.**

**Paul says it is a foolish message (1:18-25), to a foolish people (1:26-31), given by a foolish messenger (2:1-5)**

**Paul is about to lay out 3 types of wisdom.**

**1. Israel: They emphasized a powerful govt leader - and looking for him**

**They wanted power, because they wanted freedom from Rome.**

**Jesus did not do that – so they denied him as Messiah.**

**2. Greeks: They emphasized knowledge, philosophy and logic**

**50 diff schools of philosophy – to argue & debate. Known for this… the greats – Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, etc. Philosophy simply man's wisdom. lit. love of wisdom. (Sophia = 16X in ch1)**

**3. Christians: We are to emphasize the cross**

**The cross of Jesus – that is too simple, too easy, too childish – yes, it is. It is foolish. It means we have no part in it.**

**But that is God’s economy – it turns the world on its**

**Flocking to teachers who bear the marks of worldly power and wisdom undermines the economy of the kingdom. – it’s foolish.**

**Paul follows with a great contrast between the foolishness of men, and the faith of many. Between - Human wisdom Vs divine wisdom.**

**1 Cor 1:19 For it is written: (Isaiah 29:14) “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” 20 Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, (they thought of themselves as so smart) God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews (Israel) demand signs (Power) and Greeks look for wisdom, (reason and philosophy).**

**Represents two foolish human pursuits: Knowledge & Power (might)**

**- Those who rely on intellect – personal wisdom and opinion.**

**- Those who rely on assertiveness – and personal confidence.**

**You think they are wise but they are apart from Christ - foolish!**

**1 Cor 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified: (That is our message – not Christ the great, Christ the moral, Christ the good. But Christ the crucified! Died for me!**

**Many will see this as foolish – it does not compute.**

**(Christ crucified is) a stumbling block to Jews (self-assertive types) and foolishness to Gentiles, (self-proclaimed intellectuals) 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**

**A stumbling block for some… I just can’t get past that, it trips me up… Why would you give up power, position, possessions, and influence – for that pursuit?**

**You might think it foolish – friends might find it foolish – your family… but nonetheless - we preach it - we keep on giving the GN of the cross.**

**We don’t need to change it, candy coat it, whitewash it, fancify it, make it more favorable, or flavor-able, don’t need to update it, rearrange it, or reorganize it – to make it more acceptable. We just need to preach it!**

**25 For the (So called) foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God (Death on a cross) is stronger than human strength.**

**The cross is stronger than anything this world has to offer - no drug, no relationship, no child, no job, no education, not sex…**

* **The Cross is a powerful message**

**1 Cor 1:18 For the message of the cross… to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 24 …but to those whom God has called, (the cross of) Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.**

**1 Cor 1:17 – Paul even says If we point to anything less than the cross the message is, “…emptied of its power.”**

**There is no power in our message without the cross!**

**What kind of power? powerful enough to reach anyone!**

**1 Cor 1:26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. (remember what your life was like before Jesus called your name – remember this is Corinth…) Not many of you were wise by human standards; (not considered smart – looked down on) not many were influential; (not famous or position) not many were of noble birth. (not people of authority or royalty)**

**But here you are! That is the power of the cross!**

**You are not out of reach – that person is not out of reach!**

**What kind of power? powerful enough to cross barriers!**

**Roman and Greek culture was notorious for segregation and looking down on and shaming others - Then here comes Jesus**

**That is why the cross is so unifying – we all find ourselves in the same condition - at the foot of the cross. Rich, the poor, black, white, Asian, Hispanic, liberal, conservative, the have, the have not’s, the strong, the weak… all on level ground at the cross. All lost and in need of grace.**

**Powerful enough to break down barriers and build bridges!**

**What kind of power? powerful enough to make a nobody, somebody!**

**1 Cor 1:27 But (here you are…) God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things (people of low position) - and the things that are not (the nobodies and the unexpected) —to nullify the things that are, (ever notice how at times powerful people tend to make much of themselves) 29 so that no one may boast before him.**

**The power to take a group of smelly fishermen and turn them into church planters and world changers. The power to take a guy like Paul, a terrorist, and turn him into an evangelist!**

**There’s a lot of Christians who are in this life, considered losers. But guess what? You happen to be on the winning team! That makes you a winner!**

**1 Cor 1:30 It is because of him (not your might or knowledge) that you are in Christ Jesus, (it is His Cross – that turns the poor in spirit, to the rich in grace!) who has become for us wisdom (supernatural understanding) from God**

**It is in Christ alone that we make sense of the world, ourselves, and eternity. You want to understand, know JESUS!**

**Colossians 2:2 My goal is that they (Followers of Jesus) may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, 3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

**No amount of knowledge in the world is enough to satisfy – all your best efforts and might - will never be enough to know God. BUT - Jesus is more than enough – plus more!**

**1 Cor 1:30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.**

* **The Cross is a supernatural message – what only God can do!**

**3 supernatural things that happen when we turn to the cross**

**Righteousness – A declaration - made right and the power to live right.**

**In Christ, right now – you are righteous! Now live righteously!**

**Holiness – A position - set apart to live a life that reflects God.**

**In Christ, right now – you are Holy! Now live Holy (differently)**

**We have a new God given power & position to live differently.**

**Redemption – Delivered from bondage – set free by Jesus purchase!**

**In Christ, right now you are redeemed – and will be redeemed at his return. We will be totally free from pain, death, sin and temptation – until then, fight on!**

**- Christ our righteousness - done for us – has saved us from our sin**

**- Christ our holiness – doing in us - is freeing us from the power of sin**

**- Christ our redemption- will do for us - rescue from the presence of sin**

**Christ is our wisdom, power, righteousness, sanctification and redemption - Now that – is something to get excited about!**

**1 Co 1:31 Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”**

**When we look to the cross, we can’t really boast about any of it. It is not our doing at all. But is worth getting excited about!**

* **The Cross is a message of love!**

**Ro 5:8 God demonstrates his love in this: While we were sinners - the CROSS! Ro 5:6 …even when we were godless and powerless - the CROSS!**

**Ro 5:10 …even while we were His enemies and hated him - the CROSS!!**

**John 15:13 no greater love than this - the CROSS!**

**1 John 4:10 …even when we did not love him - he loved us– the CROSS!**

**That violent, bloody, torturous - beautiful cross!**

**John 3:16 For God so loved… he went to the CROSS!**

**While we rejoice at this love of Jesus – still some will not get it.**

**They don’t want to hear that God is humble because they don’t want to be humble. They don’t want to hear that God is sinless because they don’t want to stop sinning. They don’t want to hear that God is loving because they don’t love anyone but themselves. And, so they resist.**

**Jesus wasn’t hip. Jesus wasn’t cool. Jesus wasn’t rich, Jesus wasn’t powerful. He was simple, humble, at times homeless, he was arrested, suffered, executed and buried in a borrowed tomb…**

**And you expect me to believe that this same guy was God and that - he rose again from the dead! I don’t know?**

**God didn’t come to us in the way any of us would have expected. God doesn’t look like the person that we all want to be.**

**1 Cor 1:18 - Truly - …the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved (God is still working on us) it is the power of God.**