**1 Corinthians 1:18-31 February 2, 2020**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our text for this morning is the continuation of the Epistle lessons from 1 Corinthians, this particular section is 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 here re-reading these words. “For the Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” This is our text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Around this time every year, I always pay attention to the Academy Awards nominations. Usually I like to play a game where I count how many of the movies nominated I have seen. While there are 9 different films nominated for Best Picture, I’ve only seen 2 of them, and I didn’t see them in a movie theater I only saw them because they were available on the streaming service “Netflix”. I’m guessing if you looked through the list I doubt you would have seen many of them either. That’s the thing about the Academy awards, it’s usually not the most popular movies of the year that get nominated, but instead films that the Academy finds particularly interesting or groundbreaking. Hollywood makes the movies and Hollywood decides which movies are best. Which is probably why a few years ago there was a movie that garnered a lot of attention called “La La Land”, a movie that I remember seeing around that time, and a movie that actors, actresses, and others in Hollywood were drawn to because of it’s plot. The movie is about 2 people who meet and fall in love in the wonderful “La La Land” of Los Angeles. They are chasing after the dream of any beginning entertainer, and so we see the great paradox that the film creates. While all conventional wisdom would say that risking your future and moving out to Los Angeles to pursue a career in show business would be a foolish decision, this film shows that even a foolish decision can be wise if it leads to a fulfilled and prosperous life. That the foolishness of the world can’t stand in the way of your dreams and that leaving everything else behind and chasing those dreams was the wisest thing they could have ever done.

The film brings to light a thinking that would take a decision that would be wise and makes it foolish, and that which is foolish and makes it wise. Which sounds a lot like what Paul says in our Epistle lesson. In two separate occasions he takes the wisdom of God and puts it up against the wisdom of the world. At first he asks “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” Paul is showing that the wisdom of the world can’t possibly stand up against the true wisdom of God. Lastly Paul proves the true foundation and source of all wisdom by saying. “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly or foolishness of what we preach to save those who believe.” We are not saved through the wisdom of a world of choices that the world sees as wise, instead we are saved by the foolishness that is preached from this pulpit, to you who believe, of exactly what you heard re-read from 1 Corinthians at the very beginning of our message this morning. That the message and the focus is on a Savior who did not come and relax, did not come and establish an earthly kingdom where he would rule, but our salvation and hope is found in Christ who was crucified. A moment that we focus on, celebrate and feel the full weight of in our lives as Christians, which the world sees as very foolish.

It doesn’t seem rational to focus on Jesus as he hangs to die, after all how can someone who is so powerful have been caught, tried, and crucified? It doesn’t make sense, it isn’t wise to portray him that way. The wisdom of the world says that you must show power at all times, that you must make yourself as grand and great as you can with a constant reminder of all the great things you have done. That you are blessed not when you are poor in spirit, but strong and mighty. Not when you mourn but when you shield yourself from any pain or sorrow. Not to be meek but a conqueror of everything around you. You can take every one of the Beatitudes of our Gospel lessons and turn them upside down to fit the wisdom of the world around us. Many of the things that Jesus taught, and did don’t make sense to a worldly view of power and wisdom, and this is especially true at the end of our Gospel lesson, where Jesus says that you are blessed when others persecute you, and when others revile you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of Him. The wisdom of the world would find it very foolish to think that in times of persecution and pain you are being blessed and not punished, but that shows the world’s lack of wisdom. For in those moments we share in the reality of all that Jesus suffered for us, and we see the wisdom and power of the very Son of God who loves us.

We shouldn’t think that we are different than the Jews who demanded signs, because we still seek miraculous ways that God will deliver us from the problems that we have created in our lives of sin. We still want God to show his power and we give him ultimatums in our lives when it comes to our faith. And so we show how foolish we are, ignoring the signs of God’s provision and love all around us, signs that he has blessed us, clothes us, feeds us, cares for us, heals us, and instead we foolishly ask for things that he has already given us.

We shouldn’t think that we don’t foolishly seek wisdom in the wrong places like the Greeks did. Just as Paul spoke about scribes and debaters who sought a wisdom outside of God and a wisdom that changed with the opinions of the people, we too find ourselves being taught from those who seek wisdom outside of the Most High and almighty God. We too are bombarded with e-mails, news reports, and articles that say that no one believes in a world created by God, no one thinks that life begins at conception, and no one believes in traditional marriage between a man and a woman anymore. That to hold to those views is foolish, and folly. We live in a world where that which is foolish is portrayed as wise, and where the most natural revelations of our world and God’s Word are called foolish. We are persecuted by a world that hates us because we bear Jesus’ name. And it will only get worse. The wise decision in the eyes of the world would be to conform to a new ideology, to leave the old, foolish, outdated teachings of the Bible behind and adopt a new Christianity that has human reason as the source of all wisdom, and not Jesus Christ.

And yet, despite those pressures, we remain foolish in the eyes of the world, because while they see the cross as folly and foolishness, it is because they are perishing. While they see something as trivial as even walking through those doors on a Sunday morning as a waste of time and a foolish gesture, we know the power and peace that comes from being in the presence of God in His House, and that the cross of Jesus Christ that is the concrete proof that we are saved. Saved not by Jesus miraculous healings and miracles in his ministry, and not by the wisdom and teaching of Jesus as just a man who spoke of being morally good and gave advice for this life. But we are saved by the blood of the very Lamb of God. We are saved by his suffering, and his death on the cross on our behalf. For the world didn’t truly know Jesus through wisdom, they couldn’t comprehend why he would come to this world to save those who were against him, who were his enemies and enslaved to sin. Which is why in your life and your faith all you need to know, is that God so loved this world that He sent His very own Son into this world to die for you. All you need to know is that while the world may see the cross as a weakness of our Savior, and the world may see the cross as folly because it was where he died, the power of the cross is that he suffered that death for you. To show his power over sin and death, which is a reality for everyone whether they are wise and see that they need to be saved from it, or foolish enough to ignore the fact that they will someday die. The cross is the ultimate sign of wisdom because it was the only way that death could be destroyed once and for all.

Jesus is both the power of God and wisdom of God. He shows his power in that all things were created through him. He shows his power in that the sin of the entire world was taken upon his shoulders and paid for on the cross. Finally he is the very source of all wisdom because through him comes the way of everlasting life. To seek a path outside of Christ is foolishness, and folly, no matter what the opinions of the world may be at that time. Paul goes into detail with many different things Jesus has become on our behalf. That he now is our source for life, He is our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, and our redemption. He is the very source of our life because without him we would never have been saved. He is our righteousness because through his actions we are connected to our heavenly father and made perfect in his sight. He is our sanctification because we are made holy and perfect through his efforts and therefore we will stand in his presence. And finally he is our redemption in that he has bought us back from the penalty of death, he has bought us back from eternal destruction, and he has bought us back to be his own possession.

In the wisdom of the world, to have the talent to make it in “La La Land” and not go for it would be foolish, even if it meant giving everything up for just a chance. In the wisdom of God, we see that Jesus gave up his life on the cross to save us, and that we can only come into the eternal presence of our Heavenly Father through faith in him. God grant you wisdom amongst the “wise” of this world this day and always.

Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding keep our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus.

Amen.