

Lenten Devotional March 9, 2022

Scripture

1 Corinthians 2:1-13

1 When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. 3 And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. 4 My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

6 Yet 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. 7 But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 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" 10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For 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. 12 Now 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. 13 And 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.

Devotional

Dr. Scott Hagley, Associate Professor of Missiology

Lydia Millet's novel *A Children's Bible* depicts a group of families who are vacationing together at a large seaside manor when a hurricane brings American society to the edge of collapse. Told from the perspective of an adolescent looking after her younger brother, the adults in this story are feckless and fragile, more interested in escapist fantasies than taking responsibility for their children or the world they have created. The scaffolding these adult professionals once depended upon as professors, artists, and bankers has collapsed before their eyes; their collective passivity regarding climate change and political polarization has borne catastrophic fruit, and they have no skills to meet the moment. The adolescents, however, take the apocalypse in Gen-Z style, searching out DIY videos to learn to grow food, bring discipline to their unruly parents, and create new community from the ashes of the old. In a crisis of biblical proportions, wisdom gets turned inside out and upside down, for a child shall lead them.

In the opening verses of 1 Corinthians 2, Paul insists upon the upside-down, inside-out wisdom of God disclosed by the cross of Jesus Christ: "When I came to you, brothers and sisters . . . I decided to know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified." A crucified Messiah is a contradiction in terms. We don't expect God's anointed to die a criminal, abandoned by friends. The disruptive and disjunctive reality of the cross strips away our pretensions, placing us in a world without the usual scaffolding of knowledge,

with only a connection to the one Jesus calls “Father” by way of the Holy Spirit: “Now 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” (2:12).

In many ways, the various social, political, environmental, and personal crises we face only make sense in light of the cross: for at the end of human wisdom is the folly of a crucified Messiah, through whom God loves the world back to life.

Prayer

Give ear to my words, O LORD;

give heed to my sighing.

Listen to the sound of my cry,

my King and my God,

for to you I pray.

O LORD, in the morning you hear my voice;

in the morning I plead my case to you, and watch (Ps. 5:1-3).

Amen.