**Sermon Title: The Fabric of the Church in a Christ-less Culture, Part 1**

**Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18-24**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to make the fabric of the Cross of Christ the essential message.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 3 essential fabrics of the church in a Christ-less culture.**

**Introduction:** “The ancient Greeks were in love with philosophy, around which the culture was built. They had perhaps as many as fifty identifiable philosophical parties or movements, which battled for acceptance and influence.” [**The John MacArthur Commentary, 1 Corinthians, p. 36**]

 “Each provided views of man’s origin, significance, destiny, and relationship to the gods – of which they had many. They believed, just like today that philosophy (philosophia, “love of wisdom”) was all important. Philosophy provided a view, invented by man, of the meaning of life, values, relationships, purpose, and destiny. People tend to line up behind their favorite.” [**Ibid. p.36**]

 The problem is that without an absolute standard for truth, ideas of right and wrong were based entirely on human opinion.

 Martyn Lloyd Jones has commented, “The whole drift toward modernism that has blighted the church of God and nearly destroyed its living gospel may be traced to an hour when men began to turn from revelation to philosophy.” [**The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, 1 Corinthians, p.37**]

 The cross and Christ is the wisdom and power of God! He is the entire divine plan and provision for the redemption of sinners, which is the theme of all Scripture.

 The fabric of the Church, the material and message that addresses us and dresses us is foolishness to the unbeliever, but the wisdom of God to those who believe a stumbling block to unbelievers, but it is the power of God to those who are saved by it.

**I. The fabric of the cross. V.18**

**II. The fabric of the condemnation. V.19-22**

**III. The fabric of the contrast. Vv.23-24**

**I. The fabric of the cross. V.18**

This is a reference to the cross of Christ, which was viewed by the general audience as an execution-stake. The cross of Christ divides the whole human race. The division is between those who are perishing, to whom the cross is foolishness (lit. “stupid folly” or “stupidity”) and those who are being saved, to whom the cross is wisdom and power. It is the message and material of the gospel in all its fullness, which centers on the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

 (**1 Corinthians 2:2; 3:18-23**)

 One’s response to the cross of Christ determines whether they are in the process of salvation, or the process of destruction.

 **John 3:16** "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

 **Ephesians 2:1-2** And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, **2** in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience

**II. The fabric of the condemnation. V.19-22**

 A. The **pre-eminence** of God’s wisdom in the cross. V.18

 B. The **permanence** of God’s wisdom in the cross. V.19-21

 Quotation from **Isaiah 29:14** emphasizes that the wisdom of men will eventually be destroyed, in the last days.

 **Isaiah 29:14** Therefore, behold, I will again do a marvelous work Among this people, A marvelous work and a wonder; For the wisdom of their wise *men* shall perish, And the understanding of their prudent *men* shall be hidden."

 In Isaiah is where God warned the unbelieving leaders in Jerusalem who considered themselves wise, God’s judgment will expose all pretensions and pictures of human wisdom.

 C. The **power** of God’s wisdom in the cross. V.20a

 1. Where is the wise man? Where does this leave the philosopher? (**Romans 1:18-23**)

 **Isaiah 19:12** Where *are* they? Where are your wise men? Let them tell you now, And let them know what the LORD of hosts has purposed against Egypt.

 **Proverbs 14:12** There is a way *that seems* right to a man, But its end *is* the way of death. **Jeremiah 8:9** The wise men are ashamed, They are dismayed and taken. Behold, they have rejected the word of the LORD; So what wisdom do they have?

 2. Where is the Scribe? Where does that leave the Torah – teachers, writers, historians, recorders of our age?

 3. Where is the disputer of this age? Where does that leave the thinkers of today? Referring to those who argue using Philosophy, Psychology, Humanism any man made ideology.

 D. The **punishment** of God’s wisdom in the cross. V.20b-21.

 The last question of this series of heart convictions, shows the ultimate frustrating emptiness of unbelievers human wisdom. The unbelieving world takes the gospel and its meaning, message, mandate, and Messiah and calls it foolishness, but God has determined to save people on the basis of their faith in the foolish message, which is really wisdom and power.

 God wisely established that men and women could not come to know God, by human wisdom. This would exalt men, therefore God designed to save helpless, powerless, lifeless, sinners through the preaching of a message that is so simple the “worldly wise” deem it as nonsense.

 God, therefore ordained that humanity, using their own wisdom, would not come to know Him!

 It pleased God from a human perspective, salvation requires and comes by faith, through grace. (**Romans 10:8-17**)

 **John 1:12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

 E. The **proof** of God’s wisdom in the cross. V.22

 1. The **Jews** request a sign, why?

 The Jews looked for signs of the Messiah’s power, the Messiah crucified reflected a message of weakness, indicating that Jesus was a false Messiah. (**Isaiah 35, 61**) Thus the message Christ crucified was a stumbling block (an offence) to their expectations.

 2. The **Greeks** or **Gentiles** seek after wisdom, why?

 To the Gentile mindset which held no real Messianic expectation, but only general ideas of what deity should be like, the message of Christ was foolishness.

 Gentiles wanted proof by means of human reason, through ideas they could set forth, discuss and debate, without absolute certainty.

 **Acts 17:21** For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

**III. The fabric of the contrast. Vv.23-24**

 A. The mandate to preach Christ crucified. V.23a

 The only true sign and wisdom that leads men to the ultimate meaning, purpose, and destiny of life, as well as salvation is the message of Jesus and Him crucified - (**2:2**), because it alone had the power to save all who believe.

 B. The misunderstanding in preaching Christ crucified. V.23b

 1. Jews

 **Romans 9:31-33** but Israel, pursuing the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness. **32** Why? Because *they did* not *seek it* by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. **33** As it is written: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, And whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

 2. Gentiles (**Romans 1:18-23**)

**Conclusion:**  To the called of all nations, of all times, of all classes, cultures, creeds, and colors. Christ is God’s power and God’s wisdom, to save people from their sin, self, Satan and final judgment.

 To all who are “called” the message of the cross, which seems so pointless and irrelevant to many of the proud natural mind, actually demonstrates God’s greatest power and wisdom.