

Monday Night

February 3, 2020
The First Church of Squantum
Rev. Doug Gray

I. Overview and Introductions

II. Teaser: What was the least useful class you had to take in school? Why?

Or If you could boast about one thing regarding yourself or your family, what would it be?

III. Corinth and Corinthians

- A. Where is it? — Isthmus between Greece and the Peloponnese
- B. Where did Corinth come from?
 - 1. Greek city for hundreds of years until they revolted against the Romans. Burned to the ground.
 - 2. Caesar rebuilt it in 46 BC. Settled veterans and their families in Corinth.
 - 3. Created as a cross-roads city
 - 4. Boom-town — Silicon Valley or Shanghai
- C. What was Corinth famous for?
 - 1. Shipping — Come in one side, pull it across the isthmus and on you go. Lots of different kinds of people passing through
 - 2. Province Capitol — lots of amenities and bronze working
 - 3. Isthmian Games — older than the Olympics!
 - 4. Temples — Tons of them. Biggest were Apollo, Venus and Asclepius. Most had restaurants.
 - 5. Sex trade — Lots of sailors, and lots of temples.
 - 6. Getting ahead — Self-promotion and ambition.
 - 7. Spiritual hunger — Always interested in the latest and greatest idea.
 - 8. Combination Las Vegas (before the crash) and NY City. Very cosmopolitan. Very sensual/hedonistic.
- D. How did the church begin? How did the church grow?
 - 1. Paul and Corinth (51 AD; Second Missionary Journey; Acts 18)
 - 2. Paul's three letters ("painful letter", 1 Corinthians (53 AD) & 2 Corinthians)
 - 3. Paul sends trusted and able pastors to help them.
- E. What was the church (the people!) like?
 - 1. Very diverse economically and socially
 - 2. Very diverse in their religious background — some Jewish, some pagan
 - 3. They had a deep hunger and passion for God.
 - 4. They tended to go all in and take things to extremes. Hardcore!
 - 5. They tended to be shallow on the hard parts of following Jesus.
- F. The community they served had a lot to do with the problems that they faced

Things to Watch for

- 1. The letter format. Meant to be read aloud in worship or Bible Study.
- 2. Foreshadowing in the first chapter of themes throughout the letter.
- 3. Connections with the "What was the church like?" above.
- 4. Ironic, rhetorical turns of phrase that redefine the

Words and Phrases to Watch for

church = Gr. *ekklesia*, "the called out ones"

sanctified = Gr. *hagiazō*, "becoming holy"

saints = Gr. *hagios*, "holy ones", applied to those who were trying to be holy, in other words all believers (note connection with *hagiazō*, sanctified)

thank = Gr. *eucharisteo*, also "give thanks" (note the connection with *charis*, grace!)

grace = Gr. *charis*, "gift" or "joy"

knowledge = Gr. *gnosis*, "head knowledge"; for Hebrews, "knowing" is intimate & holistic.

The ancient heresy, *Gnosticism*, claims that there is a secret knowledge that was never written down...and that it's this knowledge that saves someone, not God's grace.

testimony = Gr. *marturion*, also witness, martyrdom

message = Gr. *logos*, lit. "word" but also expression

sign = Gr. *semeion*. In the NT, three words are used for miracle—*dunamis* ("mighty or miraculous deed" as in dynamite) usually translated miracle; *terra* ("wonder" as in terrific); and *semeion* ("sign" as in semaphore). Signs point to something else. In Jesus' day, people would ask for a sign, and when they forgot or if they didn't see it, they would ask for another, and another, instead of making the leap of faith.

foolishness = Gr. *moria*, from which we get "moron"

wisdom = Gr. *sophia*, looks back to Proverbs, esp. 3:19–20. The Gospel of John calls the Son, "The Word" (*logos*), and makes it clear that the universe was created through Him. (John 1:1–5)

stumbling block = Gr. *skandalon*, hindrance, scandal

brothers = Gr. *adelphoi*, generic plural. Should be translated "brothers and sisters"

righteousness = Gr. *dikaiosune*, "in a right relationship with God,"

Tying Things Together

Finding the inflection points

What's speaking to you?

What does this say about our life together?

Questions for Reflection

How does the world define wisdom? How do you know something is "good idea"?

What are Jews (the insiders) looking for? What felt need are they trying to fulfill?

Is that still true for the insiders (church-going Christians) today?

What are Gentiles/Greeks (the outsiders) looking for? What felt need are they trying to fulfill?

Is that still true for seekers who are interested but still outside the church today?

Instead of these, Paul gives people Christ crucified. Does this meet the felt needs expressed above? Does it offer anything else?

How Does This Apply to Today?

Who are some of the people powerful and successful in our time? How do we know that they are powerful and successful?

In our own lives, are we measuring our own lives by the world's standards or by Jesus' standards? How do we know?

Why do you think God chooses the weak, the foolish, even the things that are naught, to accomplish God's purposes?

Is there a place in your life where you are feeling esp. weak? How might God be at work to make this a source of new life for you and others?