

I.N.I.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
February 9, 2014
I Cor. 2:6-13

In Christ Jesus, our only Savior, whom the Holy Spirit has revealed to us as the mystery of God, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

On Wednesday night at Bible Class we were discussing Jacob's treatment of his son Joseph. How he gave to Joseph the coat of many colors clearly showing to his other brothers that Jacob loved him the best. I mentioned at that time that it reminded me of the Smothers Brothers comedy team and how Tom Smothers would always say to his brother Dick, "Mom always loved you best."

To this I got some blank stares from the under 30 crowd. The Smothers Brothers were popular in the 60's and 70's.

Well this morning's sermon text also reminded me of another old T.V. game show "I've Got a Secret." Four contestants would try to guess what the secret was of the special guest for that showing. Sometimes it would be something like "I served as a double for President so and so," or "I juggled for more hours than any other person in the world." By asking questions the contestants were to try to arrive at what the secret was. I don't remember the contestant's doing too well. Most of the time the secret was kept hidden from them and they couldn't guess it right.

What a shame it would be if God dealt with us in that same way. Telling us, "I've got a secret, and I won't tell you unless you can guess it." We would never be able to guess it since we are not in the same realm as God is. So what did God do? He revealed His secret to us. Where? In His Word and in His Word only are the secrets to eternal life; to real peace; to forgiveness and to a blessed life here on earth and an assured eternity in heaven.

We read last Sunday Paul's words that he had not come to Corinth with eloquence of speech or with human wisdom or persuasive words but with a simple proclamation of the crucified Jesus Christ which to the world is foolishness. But Paul did preach wisdom, the wisdom of God. We read again verses 6-8 of our text. **HOWEVER, WE SPEAK WISDOM AMONG THOSE WHO ARE MATURE, YET NOT THE WISDOM OF THIS AGE, NOR OF THE RULERS OF THIS AGE, WHO ARE COMING TO NOTHING. BUT WE SPEAK THE WISDOM OF GOD IN A MYSTERY, THE HIDDEN WISDOM WHICH GOD ORDAINED BEFORE THE AGES FOR OUR GLORY, WHICH NONE OF THE RULERS OF THIS AGE KNEW; FOR HAD THEY KNOWN, THEY WOULD NOT HAVE CRUCIFIED THE LORD OF GLORY.**

From these words we see that

GOD'S GREATEST SECRET

1) REMAINS HIDDEN AND UNKNOWN TO THE WORLD

The rulers and leaders of Paul's age didn't know this wisdom. They didn't know the answer to Pilate's question, "What is Truth?" If they had, Paul says, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Paul here is referring to Annas, Caiaphas, the Jewish Sanhedrin, Pontius Pilate, Herod and all who like them brought about the crucifixion of Jesus. They would not have crucified Jesus had they really known who He was. They would not have put Jesus to death as a common criminal if they had known Him to be their Lord God and the Messiah. Their crucifixion of Jesus was the ultimate proof that the leaders of Paul's day did not, would not, and could not know God's wisdom.

Paul then reaches back to the prophet Isaiah and quotes from Isaiah 64:4 with these words from our text 9 **BUT AS IT IS WRITTEN: "EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."** It never has or ever can occur to the mind of

mankind that God does things the way He does, that He does such wondrous things the way He does for those who do not deserve it.

Paul continues: **EVEN SO NO ONE KNOWS THE THINGS OF GOD EXCEPT THE SPIRIT OF GOD.** No one can know my thoughts except me. You can't read my mind nor can I read your mind. And we are all human beings. How then can we expect to be able to read and know what is in God's mind or what are His thoughts?

Case in point: The world's best minds and intellects have made many amazing discoveries and have filled libraries of the world with their amazing facts and inventions and wisdom and scientific wonders, but they have never guessed, or have ever dreamt that God so personally and intimately governs the lives of all the inhabitants of this world, so that He in His grace sent and sacrificed His Son for all people and secured eternal life for everybody. In fact most of the intellectuals of this world don't even believe that God exists or that He created us.

The difference between the spirit of the world or man's wisdom and the spirit of God or God's wisdom is world's apart; like night and day, black and white. The spirit of the world is bound only to this life; it cannot know anything of the life which is to come. It is limited only to things of this earth; it cannot know heavenly things. What man knows and desires is all man's wisdom can offer. Therefore the highest man can reach in his wisdom is to set goals for the here and now and guess about the unknown future.

And yet these unspiritual people speak as if they do know about God and His wisdom and ways. They talk about the many gods of this world, the many ways to approach or come to these many gods and the many ways to arrive at the eternal goals. They talk as if they know how life came about and where it came from, and where its going, but they really don't know.

Does the worldly person know what sin and guilt is and where it comes from? Do they really know the deceitfulness of the wicked heart that is in everyone of us? What are the answers to the problems of sickness and suffering? They think they can solve them all and put an end to crime, war and poverty. But they don't know that these will continue until the end of time. Do they know the true worth of earthly possessions? Do they know why there will never be true justice, equality and physical peace all on this earth? Do they know the value of the soul? Do they know why death reigns over mortal man? Do they know what awaits in the hereafter?

Unbelieving man searches and searches for these secrets in worldly philosophies, in paranormal activities, in the occult, in unexplained phenomena, in evolutionary theories stated as facts; in scientific hypotheses; in man-made religions and they all come up with is utter foolishness that leads only to death and hell.

And that's because God's wisdom,

GOD'S GREATEST SECRET

2) LIES HIDDEN IN THE GOSPEL

Paul says **BUT WE SPEAK THE WISDOM OF GOD IN A MYSTERY, THE HIDDEN WISDOM...** What is that hidden wisdom, what is God's greatest secret? It is the Good News of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is God's thoughts, plans and decrees for sinful mankind that have been revealed only in His Word. These are all hidden to natural man.

Yes, all people have a natural knowledge of God, that God exists, but that does not save anyone. As our confirmation children and our adult instructees know this natural knowledge that comes from our conscience and creation does not reveal to us---who God is and what God has done to save us.

The hidden wisdom, the secret wisdom of God is found only in the Bible. And this wisdom is never subject to change or debate; for it was decreed already in eternity and is given for us—to bring us to eternal glory. But if the best minds of this world have been unable to discover this secret wisdom, or even to imagine it how did you and I find it?

That brings us to our third point.

GOD'S GREATEST SECRET

3) IS REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT

We read verse 10 **BUT GOD HAS REVEALED THEM TO US THROUGH HIS SPIRIT. FOR THE SPIRIT SEARCHES ALL THINGS, YES, THE DEEP THINGS OF GOD.** Only the Holy Spirit can reveal to the world that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Son of God and Savior of all of mankind. Only the Holy Spirit can reveal to us that our Heavenly Father loved us so much that He sent His Son to take our place and earned for us our salvation. We know who God is—the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We know what He has planned for us—eternal life through Jesus. We know how He governs us—through undeserved love and mercy. We know His plans for us—Jer.29:11 **FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU," DECLARES THE LORD, "PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE.**

Our wisdom is Spirit given. Paul says in the concluding verses of our text: **NOW WE HAVE RECEIVED, NOT THE SPIRIT OF THE WORLD, BUT THE SPIRIT WHO IS FROM GOD, THAT WE MIGHT KNOW THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN FREELY GIVEN TO US BY GOD. 13 THESE THINGS WE ALSO SPEAK, NOT IN WORDS WHICH MAN'S WISDOM TEACHES BUT WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT TEACHES, COMPARING SPIRITUAL THINGS WITH SPIRITUAL.**

This Spirit-given wisdom has been revealed to us so that **WE MIGHT KNOW THE THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN FREELY GIVEN TO US BY GOD.** Things like forgiveness, eternal life, salvation, heaven, peace, joy, all the blessings of a loving and gracious God given us through His Son.

This is what Paul proclaims, that is what the Bible proclaims and that is the only wisdom that we also preach. A wisdom revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. What a blessed teaching that is. That everything in this book is a direct revelation of the Holy Spirit by inspiration to mankind; word for word, God-breathed. As Peter writes **HOLY MEN OF GOD SPOKE AS THEY WERE MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.** There are no faulty words of human wisdom in here, no man-made theories or guesses, just God's truth. **HIS GREATEST SECRET REVEALED!**

And finally we see that:

GOD'S GREATEST SECRET 4) RESULTS IN OUR SALVATION

The mysteries of reincarnation, of astral travel, of crystal powers, of psychic out of body experiences, all lead to nothing but eternal death. But the mysteries, the hidden secret wisdom of God alone leads to life. Paul writes, **WE SPEAK WISDOM AMONG THOSE WHO ARE MATURE.** Literally the word "mature" means one who has reached the goal. What a great picture for the believer. The one who has reached the goal of believing in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The one who has secured the ultimate goal of eternal life in heaven.

Even babes in Christ are wiser than this world's wisest leaders, scientists, philosophers and teachers who don't know Jesus.

"Wisdom's highest, noblest treasure, Jesus lies concealed in Thee...in paths of true wisdom my steps ever training. Oh, if I of Christ have this knowledge divine, the fullness of heavenly wisdom is mine."

I've got a secret! You've got a secret. Most often it is not good to reveal secrets. But in this case the Lord commands us to go out into the world and say; "Boy, do I have a secret to tell you!"

Amen.

