

Day 6: A Marvellous Mystery

Today's Reading

1 Corinthians 2:6-10a

Devotion

"...we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began."

1 Corinthians 2:7

As we seek to share the Gospel with our non-Christian friends and family, it's important for us to do our homework, to study, organise our thoughts and harness the fullness of our human logic and potential. We should come into conversations prepared to give an account for the hope that we have.

However, today's passage is a helpful reminder that at the end of the day, nobody can be "convinced" or "reasoned" into salvation. This is not merely an intellectual process. If it was, only the most intelligent among us would be in the Kingdom! Instead the opposite is true. The wisdom of God is different to, and in fact confounds, the wisdom of the world. Which means that those who are seemingly foolish in the eyes of the world can grasp the truths of God, and those with all the accolades in the world can stumble over the folly of Christ.

Ultimately, then, we need to pray for a supernatural work in people – that even as we do our best to helpfully lead people toward Christ, we must beseech God to unveil the mysteries of His love and wisdom to those that are still blind towards Him. Only He can make the blind see!

Prayer

Lord, may you open the eyes of those who do not yet know you, so that they can embrace your wisdom and understand the marvellous mysteries of God. Amen.

Day 7: Thoughts of God

Today's Reading

1 Corinthians 2:10b-16

Devotion

"...no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God."

1 Corinthians 2:11

In today's reading, Paul states that it is the Holy Spirit who reveals deep things to Christians. Therefore, if we desire to mature in Christ we must rely on the Holy Spirit's power rather than our own. Another way of saying it is this: the Holy Spirit is the great leveller. Without Him, even the most experienced or knowledgeable Christians cannot plumb the depths of God. However with the Holy Spirit, any and every believer can understand and appreciate the thoughts of God, for it is the Holy Spirit who enlightens us.

Paul informs us that the Holy Spirit searches the very depths of the heart and mind of God. In the same way that our human spirit functions in us, the Holy Spirit functions as a member of the Godhead. If you want to know someone deeply you need to tune into their spirit; similarly, the Holy Spirit is tuned in and has access to the deepest thoughts and innermost workings of the Godhead.

Are you dependent on the Holy Spirit in your Bible study? In your prayer life, do you ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you God's wisdom so that you can pray more effectively?

Prayer

God we ask that by your Holy Spirit, our knowledge of you and relationship with you would ever deepen. We rely on your Spirit, rather than our strength, to grow in intimacy with you. Amen.

Day 8: “I’m Only Human!”

Today’s Reading

1 Corinthians 3:1-4

Devotion

“You are still worldly...are you not acting like mere humans?”

1 Corinthians 3:6

You may have heard the saying, “I’m only human!” It’s commonly used to excuse oneself after making a mistake. The premise of the saying is that we are imperfect creatures and thus cannot help but make a mess of things from time to time.

While to a certain extent that may be true, Paul calls the church in Corinth to a higher standard by reminding them that they are in fact more than mere humans. He expects more of them. In a way, he is disappointed that in their behaviour towards one another they are being more influenced by the world than they are by the Kingdom (3:3). They are acting in a way that is incongruent with their identity – for they are not mere humans but in fact children of God, sons and daughters of the King of Kings, and a kingdom of priests unto God.

Let us not excuse ourselves for ungodly behaviour or unholy living by being “only human”. God has made us to be so much more – let us live in accordance with the calling that we have received!

Prayer

Lord, may we never sell ourselves short of the people that you have created us to be. Thank you that unlike the rest of creation, you have made us in your image – and that as your redeemed people we can live in the fullness of our identity in Christ. Amen.

Day 9: Watching Faith Grow

Today's Reading

1 Corinthians 3:5-9

Devotion

"I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow."

1 Corinthians 3:6

If you've ever walked with someone on their journey to faith, you know how long it can take. While some people have dramatic conversions as sudden as turning on a light bulb, most do not. For most people, it is a gradual process.

Coming to faith often involves progress toward a tipping point, like on a seesaw. Have you ever walked up on a seesaw? Picture one end of the seesaw representing a position apart from Christ, and the other end representing firm belief in Christ. As you walk up from the end apart from Christ, you gradually reach a tipping point where you are leaning toward firm belief.

In this scenario, I imagine a spiritually interested person needing, say, ten ratcheting "clicks" to get from the one position to the other. Instead of pressuring someone to accept Christ, I've found it helpful to listen for the "clicks."

I hear a "click" when someone makes a comment about their spiritual experience or allows me to pray for them. I hear another when someone tells me they'll come to worship on Sunday, even if it turns out that they "couldn't make it." Each of these minor breakthroughs represents another "click."

Most "clicks" are not dramatic, but as they happen, the person approaches a point where their seesaw begins to tip the other way. Then a quietly advancing process brings them from unbelief to faith. Whose next "click" are you praying for?

Prayer

*Lord, help us notice the ways you are working in the people around us.
And use us to help bring others to faith. Amen.*

Day 10: Transformation - A Foundation of Values

Today's Reading

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

Devotion

*"If any man builds on this foundation...his work will be shown
for what it is."*

1 Corinthians 3:12-13

The bamboo plant seems to do almost nothing for the first four years of its life. However sometime during the fifth year, it shoots up 90 feet in 60 days. Would you say that the bamboo grew in two months or five years?

Bamboo could not grow so rapidly unless it stored up nutrients for several years. Christians as well can have times of amazing growth, but often the source of that growth can be traced back to a foundation of values that was firmly established earlier.

If Christ Jesus is the foundation of our life, we can help build a huge skyscraper of spiritual growth. If we commit ourselves to truth while we are young, we will reap a harvest of righteousness. When Christ is first in our lives, growth spurts result, even though it may be years before the results show.

Building on the foundation of Christ with gold, silver, and precious stones means living life with firm convictions and God-glorifying values. Selfish pleasures will not survive the grave. They will be burnt up. Yet anything founded on Christ will not be destroyed by the fire of judgment.

So build on the foundation of Christ's finished work with enduring values like faith, hope, and love. Don't be discouraged if results aren't immediate. Growth will come. It's the promise of God.

Prayer

Father, thank you for the firm foundation of Christ's finished work. Help us to build solidly with faith, hope, love, forgiveness, reconciliation, and more, in Jesus' name. Amen.