

Text: I Corinthians 2:6-10
Title: “Truth ... Do you Get It?”

INTRODUCTION

One of Jesus’ most vivid stories is of a farmer who went out to sow seed in his field. With the wide sowing motion of his arms, some of the seed inadvertently fell on the hard-packed path around the field; it became food for the birds. Some parts of the field had a layer of rock under a shallow layer of soil. The seed immediately sprouted but it didn’t last long because there was not enough moisture in the thin layer of soil for the roots to develop. There was a patch of the field where the farmer had lost his battle with the weeds. Some of the seed fell there, and sprouted. But before long the weeds outgrew the wheat, and ultimately choked out the good crop. However, to the farmers delight ...

Luke 8:8 - Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.”

Now this is commonly called the parable of the sower. But it might also be entitled “The Parable of the Soils.” The sower is the Lord. The seed is the Word of God. And the soil represents the hearts of those who hear the Word of God ... and how they receive the Word. This story is about how people handle the truth.

Jesus went on to explain. Sometimes people come under the teaching and the preaching of the Word of God, and they are preoccupied. In fact, they don’t let the Word penetrate their hearts. It stays on the surface, and Satan comes and snatches the seed of the Word away. Still others come under the teaching and the preaching of God’s Word. They hear it gladly. There’s a momentary interest in it. But again the condition of the soil of their heart is such that there’s no place for the seed to take root. So when the heat of adversity comes, their shallow faith cannot sustain any growth, and they fall away. Still others come under the teaching and the preaching of God’s Word, and Jesus says that they are choked off because of their obsession with worries, riches and pleasures. And their faith never matures as it should. But Jesus continues...

Luke 8:15 - The seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

What kind of listener are you? How do you handle the truth of God’s Word. When the precious seed of God’s Word is sown in the soil of your heart, what happens? Is your heart so hard that the seed has no chance of penetrating; and Satan’s dirty birds just come and snatch it away? Is your interest in the things of God so shallow that while you can handle a little bit, it isn’t long before is just withers? Is your heart so polluted and divided with worries, and an obsession with the things of this world, that you’ll never grow in the truth? Or is your heart good and noble so that when you hear the truth of God’s Word, you take it to heart and you stay with it until it produces fruit in your life?

That’s the kind of disciples I want us to be.

Turn with me to I Corinthians 2:6-10. If we were to categorize the average church member at the Corinth Baptist Church, it would probably be the third type of soil that Jesus described. For here was a church that was divided about, and distracted from, the truth. They couldn't decide if they were going to listen to and embrace the wisdom of men, or the wisdom of God ... the truth of the Word and the Gospel. **Read text.**

1 Corinthians 2:6 - We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

Now when we talk about "wisdom" we're essentially talking about the answer to the question, "What makes life work?" The answers that come from what Paul calls "the wisdom of this age" is (as I said last week) self-sufficient, self-seeking, and self-righteous. But the answer that comes from the wisdom of God is that life really only "works" when it is Christ-centered, Christ-dependent, and Christ-exalting.

We're talking about truth, and what you do with it.

1. TRUTH ... THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING IT (vv.6-7)

v.6 - "The wisdom of this age ... the rulers of this age ... are coming to nothing." In other words the answers that this world offers ... and the people who tout those answers are coming to nothing. "The rulers of this age..." are the powers-that-be. They are the so-called "experts."

Right now, Oprah Winfrey and her wisdom (her answers) are really something. But sooner or later it will come to nothing.

Right now, rap artist Eminem, and his profanity and hate-filled answers are really something. But sooner or later they will come to nothing.

Right now, liberal politicians, and their man-centered ideas are really something (at least in some circles). But sooner or later they will come to nothing.

Right now, Hollywood's hedonistic entertainment is really something. But sooner or later it will all come to nothing.

In fact, it's all so certain that Paul speaks of it in the present tense: "(they) are coming to nothing."

But that's why Paul says, "We don't spend a lot of time on that junk. The answers it offers are wrong."

v.6 - We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature...

The "message of wisdom" that Paul speaks is the truth of God revealed in the Good News of Jesus Christ ... it is the Word of God.

What does it mean that he speaks this message "among the mature"?

Some version of the Bible say “we speak wisdom to the perfect.” Well the word doesn’t mean sinless perfection. Rather it means people in whose heart the Word of God has taken root by faith, as opposed to those who have rejected that truth.

1 Corinthians 2:13 - This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

And only a believer, indwelt by the Spirit can get it.

People who are indwelt by the Spirit of God ought to hunger for this message. They ought to crave the spiritual nourishment of the Word of God.

It’s like what Jesus said in the parable of the sower. The people with good and noble hearts hear the Word and heed the Word and have the Word.

Now there’s a problem in the church at Corinth, and we’ll get this later in our study of I Corinthians. But notice...

1 Corinthians 3:1 - Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ.

ILLUSTRATION – Many of you know that I love ice cream. And I believe one of my primary missions in life is to make sure my little granddaughter Caroline learns to like ice cream. So I feed her ice cream every chance I get. But her mom and dad have a different mission. Their mission is to make sure Caroline grows as a healthy child. So they feed her the food that will help her grow. I’m feeding her food that, if she gets too much of it, will make her fat. They’re feeding her food that will make her strong and healthy. (Having said that, I will not give up. Every child needs to love ice cream, in my opinion.)

So if I take off my grandfather’s hat and put on my pastor’s hat, my mission changes. I, and the other leaders of our church, want to make sure that you are feeding on what spiritual people, mature, growing Christians, need to feed on.

Now Paul goes on.

1 Corinthians 2:7 - No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

Now this verse tells us a little more about the truth or God’s wisdom.

- **It’s a secret** – The NIV says it is “secret wisdom.” What does that mean? It’s not like a mystery or a puzzle that is complicated and hard to grasp. That’s not it. Rather it is something that can only be discerned if it is revealed. If I have a secret, the only way you can know that secret is for me to tell you.

ILLUSTRATION – The wisdom of this world can be unlocked with a key marked “intellect.” But the wisdom of God, the truth, is only unlocked with a key called “revelation.” God has to show it to us, or it cannot be discerned.

- **It has been hidden** – God determined that it would not be understood apart from His unveiling it. So smart people do not have an advantage in the things of God over not-so-smart people.
- **It's purposeful** – The contents of this secret wisdom is none other than God's glorious plans for our glory. We'll come back to that in just a moment.

So when we're talking about the importance of getting it, we're talking about the answer to life's most perplexing question ... what makes life really work? ... TRUTH!

In fact, Paul refers to this truth in a variety of ways in I Corinthians 2:

v.1 – “the testimony of God”

v.7 – “secret wisdom”

v.9 – “what God has prepared for those who love him”

v.11 – “the thoughts of God”

v.13 – “spiritual truths”

v.16 – “the mind of Christ”

The importance of getting it is that God has destined it for our glory from the beginning. It has to do with our purpose. It is what God wants for all of us. It was in His mind when He created us. It was in His mind when He redeemed us. For our glory....

It starts with our salvation and runs right through in our sanctification, and will result in our ultimate glorification in heaven.

That's why it is so important for people to get this truth. Because, you see, there is ...

2. TRUTH ... THE POSSIBILITY OF MISSING IT (v.8)

Exhibit A of this entire discussion is seen in what happened in the last hours of Jesus' life. We've been talking about the way of the Cross. The Cross was necessary for our redemption. And it came to pass through men who missed the truth of God in Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:8 - None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

The “rulers of this age” were the important people who, from an earthly perspective were responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus ... the Jewish leaders and the Roman authorities. You see, they failed to acknowledge that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.” They didn't listen to His teaching and respond by faith and obedience. In short ... they missed it ... and crucified the Lord of glory.

There Jesus was ... right before their very eyes. They heard His message. They saw the way He lived, and the miracles He performed. They missed it.

And people still miss it today. And by rejecting Jesus Christ, they are just like those who nailed Jesus to the Cross of Calvary.

The things of God, the promises of His Word, and the commands of God are missed by so many people. The thought of seeking God, of putting their trust in God, simply doesn't occur to their natural minds.

ILLUSTRATION – The Barna Group has done some interesting research on spirituality in America. A story in The Christian Post reports the latest Barna Group survey found that 51 percent of adults identified family as their first priority and only 16 percent listed faith, making it a runner-up. The survey was conducted on 1,003 adults aged 18 years and older from across the nation in January 2006. Interestingly, nearly 60% of Americans consider themselves “deeply spiritual,” but only 25% of them ranked faith first among their priorities. What is that saying? "Spirituality is in vogue in our society today," said George Barna. "It is popular to claim to be part of a 'faith community' or to have a spiritual commitment but what do Americans mean when they claim to be 'spiritual?'" It is something other than a faith rooted in the revelation of God's truth.

3. TRUTH ... THE SECRET TO UNDERSTANDING IT (vv.9-10)

Paul is roughly quoting from Isaiah 64 here.

1 Corinthians 2:9 - However, as it is written: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”—

We're talking about God's plans ... what God has prepared for all of His creation. It's what we talked about in v.7 ... what God destined for our glory before time began. It's beyond what we can see with our eyes and hear with our ears, and absorb with our minds. In other words, you can have the greatest eyesight ... the most powerful telescope or the most powerful microscope and still miss this. You can have the best hearing ... in fact you can have the most sophisticated listening device and assemble everything that has ever been said in history ... and still miss it. You can have the most brilliant intellect, and the most powerful computer this world has ever assembled ... and still miss it.

“What God has prepared...” – not just the future glory of heaven. But it's something that God wants us to know now. He's speaking of the glorious wisdom that God imparts by His Spirit now ... the answers to the question, “What makes life work?” It's our purpose for being alive.

God has prepared something for us that is incomprehensible. It is so wonderful that our human minds cannot fathom it. God has destined things “for our glory.” This glorious life starts now, but the best is yet to come. Just think of what God has prepared for those who love him.

In v.7 it says that it is a “secret wisdom” and a wisdom that has been “hidden.” And consequently some missed it; they didn't understand it. So how do we get it? Is it possible to get it? If eye hasn't seen it, if ears haven't heard it, if it hasn't entered into the hearts of people, then how do we understand it? How do we get it?

1 Corinthians 2:10a - but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

You CAN know and discern and understand the things of God, but only if you are indwelt by the Spirit of God.

CONCLUSION

I carry a set a keys. One of them unlocks my car. One unlocks my house. Two or three get me into various places in the church. Maybe you have an extraordinary intellect, and it has been the key to your advancing in your education. Or you have a powerful physique that has been the key to your succeeding on the field of athletics. Maybe you have great sales ability, and that has been the key to advancing in your profession. That's all great. But when it comes to the things of God there is one key, and that key is a Person ... the Holy Spirit. Only as you are indwelt by the Spirit of God can you discern the great things God has in store for those who love Him.