

“The Wisdom of the Table”

Communion Meditation

Preached 02/05 Dr. Mack Sigmon

In the 1930’s there was an illustrated pulp adventure magazine titled “Doc Savage” which was the inspiration for later stories and films of the same genre such as the Indiana Jones series. In one of the stories, Doc Savage develops a process for bodily resurrection, but because of the rarity of the ingredients available, there is only enough to bring one person back to life.

When Doc Savage announces that he has the means to bring one person back from the dead, he solicits suggestions from a global audience. Some respond with deeply emotional requests for lost loved ones, while others suggest various historical personalities whose bodies, or mummies, are recoverable – Napoleon, Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, William Shakespeare, Thomas Edison, and Jesus of Nazareth, although Dr. Savage points out that Jesus has no physical body to recover.

After months of speculation, and in conjunction with worldwide governments and academics, Doc Savage makes the announcement to a global population breathless with anticipation: “The field was narrowed down to Edison...Edison is a man of inventions. He stands for material progress, for the introduction of new machinery...but it is doubtful if more scientific progress will help the world...the name which we finally decided upon is that of an ancient whose mortal remains were recently found and positively identified...so that man will be brought back to life...the world does not need inventions. It needs profound wisdom. Solomon is the man to be resurrected.”

Well, as you might imagine, the resurrection of Solomon, the wise regent of Ancient Israel, doesn't work out exactly as planned. A group of mobsters steal Solomon's mummy and swap it for an evil pharaoh from the same period; but I find it interesting that this story from the 1930's, a time when the world was in great turmoil and preparing for global warfare, raises up wisdom as the most desirable of human qualities. That makes sense, doesn't it? Do you think that wisdom would be the most desirable trait for our time if we had the same choice?

In the time of the Apostle Paul and the early Christian church, wisdom was also valued as the most desirable of human characteristics, both in the religion of Paul's Jewish culture and the philosophy of the Greek and Roman world. In the New Testament, Paul engages with the wisdom parties of the Jewish religion and debates in the public philosophical forums located throughout the Roman empire such as the Areopagus in Athens.

There is also a Wisdom sect which has emerged in the fledgling Christian congregations, particularly those in Asia Minor with their multi-cultural communities – a group which represents a challenge to the Christianity that Paul is trying to teach. It is clear from Paul's letters that the wisdom faction is causing division in these congregations. While we do not know the exact nature of the conflict, it is possible that the wisdom sect is using particular books of the Hebrew scriptures or wisdom figures such as Solomon as a means of interpreting the person and work of Jesus Christ – Christ as a wise teacher rather than the Savior of the world.

Paul seeks to explain to the Corinthian congregation the new meaning of wisdom that has been revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – a wisdom expressed not in eloquent human philosophy, but in divine love: “When I came to you, brothers and

sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.”

Franciscan priest and Christian author Brennan Manning in one of his books clearly reflects Paul’s intentions when Manning writes: “The Christ within who is our hope of glory is not a matter of theological debate or philosophical speculation. He is not a hobby, a part-time project, a good theme for a book, or a last resort when all human effort fails. He is our life, the most real fact about us. He is the power and wisdom of God dwelling within us.”

Much of the religion of Paul’s time, like some of the religions of our day, focused not on God’s spiritual relationship to humanity, but on personalities and historical figures who represented certain human ideas. Last week I spoke about the gnostic influences in the early Christian church who interpreted the life of Christ through mystery and secret knowledge. At the opposite end of the spectrum were the wisdom factions who elevated philosophy above faith, viewing Christ as the ultimate teacher and Christianity as a philosophical path to enlightenment.

Paul does not completely replace wisdom with faith in his message to the Corinthians, but he does site the essential meaning of Christ’s life as a new wisdom beyond human comprehension – a divine wisdom that is revealed rather than learned, embraced rather than debated: ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’— these things God has revealed to us through

the Spirit; no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God."

The table that is before us this morning is one of those incomprehensible gifts of God's wisdom, where Christ meets those who love and believe in him. This table represents no human philosophy or parochial wisdom. We do not gather around this table to debate, but to love each other; we do not bring our arguments to this table; rather, we bring our sins; and we receive at this table not an affirmation of our wisdom, but an affirmation of God's love for us. For Paul, the wisdom of Christ's supper is that we need not be wise to share it—only open to the love of Christ.

We need not fantasize about resurrecting Solomon to save this broken world, because God so loved this broken world that God has given us the real resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is our faith, and it is not debatable. As Thomas Carlyle wrote, "(One) lives by believing something; not by debating and arguing about many things." So as we come to Lord's table this morning, let us forsake all arguments and opinions, and gather as hungry children, ready to be fed with the wisdom of God's love, peace, and joy. Amen.

“They are teachers who point to their teaching or show some particular way. In all of these, there emerges an instruction, a way of living. It is not Zoroaster to whom you turn. It is Zoroaster to whom you listen. It is not Buddha who delivers you; it is his Noble Truths that instruct you. It is not Mohammed who transforms you; it is the beauty of the Koran that woos you. By contrast, Jesus did not only teach or expound His message. He was identical with His message. “In Him,” say the Scriptures, “dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” He did not just proclaim the truth. He said, “I am the truth.” He did not just show a way. He said, “I am the Way.” He did not just open up vistas. He said, “I am the door.” “I am the Good Shepherd.” “I am the resurrection and the life.” “I am the I AM.” In Him is not just an offer of life’s bread. He is the bread. That is why being a Christian is not just a way of feeding and living. Following Christ begins with a way of relating and being.”

— [Ravi Zacharias, Jesus Among Other Gods: The Absolute Claims of the Christian Message](#)

“Philosophers can debate the meaning of life, but you need a Lord who can declare the meaning of life.”

— [Max Lucado, Traveling Light: Releasing the Burdens You Were Never Intended to Bear](#)

“A man lives by believing something; not by debating and arguing about many things.”

— [Thomas Carlyle](#)