

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS | CHURCH IN THE WILD

RYAN BRAMLETT | JULY 7, 2024

Traders Point, hey. It's good to be with you today. How are we doing? Good.

Look at this. The 4th of July crowd. Give it up for yourselves. You are here. Right? Hey, listen. I don't know a lot but you all are actually going to heaven. Alright? It's a big thing that you are here. I'm excited that you are here and we can continue in this series Church In The Wild.

What we've been doing in this series is just studying through the letter of 1 Corinthians. We're going to get there. We're going to get there. Alright? If you are still hearing fireworks in your mind, that's okay.

What we're doing is we said, "Hey, we're just going to open up this letter that Paul writes to the church in Corinth. And we're going to learn what it means to be a church in the wild.

And I'm just going to start today by going back to the map. If you were here last week we talked about this. And I just think it helps us to be grounded in what is happening and where these accounts really took place.

Sometimes when we talk about biblical cities it sounds like we're talking about Narnia. It's this fantasy world out there. But the truth is this is a real place. Right? Corinth was in southern Greece about 50 miles from Athens. Modern day Turkey right there. So it's a real place. You can go there today.

And what we looked at last week is that this was supposed to be a church in the wild. Meaning, they were supposed to follow Jesus' Great Commission to go. To go out all across the world to make disciples, to baptize them, to teach them everything Jesus had commanded.

But the problem with the church in Corinth was that the boundaries between the church and the city had pretty much been completely removed.

You couldn't tell the difference between where the city was and where the church was. You couldn't tell the difference between the people of the city and the people of the church. And Paul writes to basically remind them of who they are and the mission that they have been called to.



The tension that they faced and the pitfalls that they were falling into are the same as for me and you because we talk about being a church in the wild, going out, being a church on a hill, a city of light. You know what I mean? Of salt.

The risks we run into are two different things. It's isolation and absorption. Absorption happens when the church goes out but it loses what makes it unique and it just kind of absorbs the culture around it and you can't tell a difference. That's one.

The other one is that a lot of times churches see what is happening out there and how the city is affecting the church and are like, "You know what? We're not going to go anymore. We're just going to be content. We're going to gather together in these little holy huddles and we're going isolate from the rest of the world."

But what we've said is that Jesus doesn't give us either of those options. He says, "I want you to go and I want you to advance My kingdom. And I want you to be salt and light. I want you to be this outpost. I want you to be this outpost throughout the world where people can know that there is a refuge in the wilderness for them." And that's the kind of church we want to be.

Last week we got started and we said, "You know what? Even with all of the stuff that was going on in the city, and this was a wild city..."

When I was reading this past week and studying it kept saying that Corinth was like the crossroads of Greece, which I thought was kind of funny because Indiana is the crossroads of America. You're all dialed in now. We're going to be ready today.

So, yeah. All of these people were traveling through all of these different places and they would get to Corinth and they would look around and they would say, "You know what? I think I'm going to stay," which created this very diverse city, which was beautiful, but it made it hard for them to live together as one.

And even though all of that was happening in the city, what we said was they were being sabotaged from within. There was a lot of division within the church. In verse 10—we looked at this as the theme of the whole letter or the thesis of everything that Paul was going to continue to go back to. 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 10 where he says:

"I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions in the church. Rather, be of one mind, united in thought and purpose." (NLT)

So last week we looked at what was creating division in the church. They began to break into these different clicks. And this guy started following this leader. And she started following this leader over here. It was just division.

Today, Paul is going to continue the message of something that he had that we all have that can heal the divide. And it's right here: to be of one mind, united in thought and

purpose. With so much diversity, all of these different backgrounds, he says, "We can have this through the message of the cross."

This is what we're going to hit on over and over again as we work through the Scripture today. We're going to look at the message of the cross and it's all wrapped around this idea of strength in weakness. That's where we're going to be.

So, what I'm going to do now is just kind of read a section. We're going to be in 1 Corinthians starting in chapter 1, verse 18. If you have a Bible I would encourage you to open it up, flip there.

If not, every week in this series I would encourage you to bring your Bibles. Because I'm not just going to study it, which you will be able to see, but I want to also give you tools and questions to ask so that when you are on your own you can begin to study God's Word and you can feel just as confident meeting with God as you do on Sundays.

And our prayer is that you would not be dependent on what happens here on a Sunday in your relationship with God. Alright? Amen?

So, starting in 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, verse 18 this is what Paul says. He says:

"The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. As the Scriptures say, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and discard the intelligence of the intelligent.'

"So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching," mine included, "to save those who believe.

"It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom. So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense." 1 Corinthians 1:18-23 (NLT)

So, this is where we are. This is that unifying message that we were talking about. And it's all under this banner of:

The Message of the Cross

Paul says this is going to be the message that unifies all people, but it won't be that easy because, as you already noticed, everyone thinks it's foolish for their own reasons.

Right there at the beginning he makes it very clear for the need of a church in the wild. He says, "Because there are so many people on the road to destruction, that's why we are needed.

"We are needed to be out there to be an outpost to meet people on the path where they are going, drifting farther and farther away from God. We are the ones who God sent,

calling people, pleading with people, getting them to turn around and come back to God.”

That is the church in the wild. And he says, “I just want you to know that how you are going to be received is that they are going to think this message is foolish.”

Why? Why would they think the message of the cross is foolish? Well, think about what the cross was. The cross represented the most shameful and humiliating way to die.

This would be like saying the message of the electric chair, the message of death. That is what they are coming to present. And most people are like, “Nope. Don’t want that message. Do you have another one?”

And then he gives the two groups. And he says why both miss the message of the cross. He says, first the Jews miss it because they are looking for a sign. And the cross is like the anti-sign.

Have you ever been praying, “God, just give me a sign. God, please show me something.” And then you open your eyes, lightning strikes and something catches on fire. And you are like, “Lord, give me a different sign. I don’t know what that meant.”

But that’s the way the Jews would have seen the idea of the Messiah, a Savior, on a cross. They didn’t have a box for it.

They were looking for a sign but it was the Messiah, the Christ. And this may be new information for some of you, but Christ is not Jesus’ last name. It’s not like a Michael Jordan, Jesus Christ type of a thing, Christ was a title. It meant Messiah. It meant the Anointed One, the sent Savior from God to restore hope to the world.

As the Jewish people knew it, their sign was going to be a hero on a horse who had come to overtake Rome. They were not expecting to see a criminal on a cross. So they missed the sign completely. They didn’t see the power of the message of the cross.

But it wasn’t just them, it was the Greeks too. And they were looking for wisdom, so they missed the message of the cross. This is what the Greeks were all about. What is wise? What is the best way to do something? How do you get to the good life?

And one thing was for sure, wise people didn’t end up on crosses. “So when you say that you’re Savior was on a cross, I’ve heard all that I need to know.”

But we are like, “No, no, no. Wait. It’s not just that He was on a cross, there is more.” Like, “Okay, go.” “He resurrected three days later.” And they are like, “You lost us,” because human wisdom would say that dead men don’t rise. Human wisdom would say dead means defeat, not victory.

But godly wisdom says that with God all things are possible. God would use the symbol of the cross, a symbol that only meant death and destruction.

Think about it now. Think about the cross. How many times a day and week do you see a cross. We have them hanging in our houses. We have them around our necks as jewelry. Some people even are wild enough to put them on their arms as tattoos.

Now, because of Jesus this message of foolishness is now one of love and power and of sacrifice. And it has completely changed the way we view the cross.

But both were missing it because both were expecting to see God move in different ways. And they couldn't come to terms with the fact that God would choose something as low as a cross. That God would become weak as a man and die a criminal's death. There was no wisdom in it for them. So they missed it.

And I just want to say, because it ends with this, so the Jews consider it an anti-sign, they are offended whenever you talk about it. And the Gentiles think nonsense. I would just ask you, if we are all living under this banner, this way of the cross, is there any part of your life that when people meet you...

I'm going to say that these are the two responses we face today in the Christian faith. It's either complete nonsense or, "I'm offended by it."

Are there people in your life who are offended by you and your beliefs? It doesn't necessarily mean that's a bad thing. Are there people in your life who think what you do on a Sunday and with all of the hours of your day and how you spend your time is complete nonsense? If not, I would question it.

Just begin to look. Is there anything in my life where I begin to absorb the outside culture? Am I really standing firm in what I believe is the message of the cross?

He says all of this is for the Jews and the Greeks, but he says that for Christians it's different, verse 24. He says:

"But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles," the message is for everyone, "Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God." He is these things.

"This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength." 1 Corinthians 1:24-25

Now, I want us to think about this and what it's not saying. This isn't saying that there is any part of God that is weak or foolish. What it's saying is, even if the plans of God look foolish to the world, and weak to the world, that doesn't mean that they are.

Trust that God's way is better. And His ways are not always... I would scratch that and say, actually He says:

"My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,' says the Lord. 'And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.”
Isaiah 55:8-9 (NLT)

We’ve got to come to this place and come to terms with the fact that human wisdom, left to itself, is not going to lead us to become more like God, more godly. We’re not just going to evolve on our own to be like Him because we are completely different than Him.

But there is this myth that as society goes, as we continue to evolve, that, as a society, we’re just going to become like this utopian future. How’s that going? Right? The more technology we get, the more time goes by, we’re not moving closer to a place of love and joy and peace—it’s actually the opposite.

It’s because God’s ways are higher. God’s ways are above. It’s not even the same sport. It’s not even the same arena.

Sometimes we think, “Well, we’re like in the Little League and then once we continue to go we’ll evolve and be in the Majors and be like God.” That’s the way we see it.

If you have ever seen or watched Little League, you are reminded of how different Little League is from the Major League. Right?

My son has been playing baseball for the past two years. There are two things that happen out there that never happen in the MLB, at least I don’t think.

There was one day we’re playing. It’s the middle of summer. It was hot. Right? And my guy, he’s playing first base. He’s a very large boy. Right? And he’s sitting there and he’s all the way spread out like this [legs wide, leaning back on his heels]. He has no cares about what is happening in this game.

He’s hot. And he’s moving his hat. He’s wiping his head. And he’s constantly yelling at the coach. Nothing to do with the game. He’s like, “Coach. Coach. Do you know if anybody signed up to bring us snacks today? Coach, do you know what the snacks are? Better not be an apple.” He’s just going back and forth.

And the idea is that if you’re looking at that, it’s like there are kids out there that are like that, but one day they are going to make it to the greatest show in the world, they’re going to play in the MLB.

I think a lot of times we think about that with us and God. Right? Like, we’re just going to constantly evolve and become more like Him. But we do not drift toward godliness. It’s us coming to a place and choosing to follow Him, choosing to land on His truth.

God’s Way is Better

And we have to make this decision before we get to place and circumstance, choosing that God’s way is better is what is going to keep us and save us from ourselves. And



what we've already seen is that God's way is different. We would never pick the cross. Right? But God did.

So, that is an invitation to us that when we are going through life, even when it doesn't feel like it's the right thing, "I'm going to trust that God has called me to this and He's going to be with me.

The message of the cross tells us that even when it feels like death, it doesn't mean that it's wrong. And to have faith is to trust that no matter where God leads you, even if it doesn't feel right or doesn't feel like the direction we should go, "I'm going to trust Him no matter what."

I think that is what Paul is getting across here. Remember the message of the cross. Remember how foolish it was when you first heard it. But remember once you received it and you heard it for what it is, the power that came with it. Hold onto that same energy as you live your life. And remember that that is what faith is.

That's the first example. The first example of how different God's wisdom is from yours—it's the cross.

And the second example he is going to give us is a little bit more offensive. Alright? It might hurt your feelings a little bit but it's okay because it comes from God, not from me. So we're going to remember that as we read what we're doing here. So, verse 26, he says:

"Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes..."

That's a nice way of saying most of you are not so wise in the world's eyes. I'll let you infer another word that you could put there.

"...or powerful or wealthy when God called you. Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful."

And the word shame here is actually the word nullify, to make something no longer true.

So what he's saying is that God used these things, they were once just a staple of truth in society: this is what wisdom looked like, this is what power looked like, this is what success looked like until God chose you to start changing the world. That's the message behind the cross.

"God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God." 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (NLT)

So, what he said is, "As crazy as it is to say that the cross was God's method for bringing salvation, it's even just as crazy as the fact that God picked you."

Just think about how different that is from our vantage point. I mean, we are in the season of the Olympics. Right? Think about how the whole world chooses its teams. They don't just go into random gyms. Like just jumping into L. A. Fitness and going, "Hey, guys who are running, open gym basketball, give me 5, we're playing China tomorrow. Come with me."

No. We spend years looking for and training and preparing and sending the best of the best in every sport that competes. And on a smaller level, that's how we all operate. Those are the people we pick. Who are the powerful? Who are the best? That's our best chance.

And I want you to think about how differently God operates. That is not His M.O. Any character that you've studied in the Bible, in the Old Testament, God actually does the opposite. He chooses the least likely candidate, the unlikely hero, because He wants it to be painfully clear and He wants there to be no confusion when this happens, when victory comes, it is because of Him and Him alone.

Think about the life of David. David is probably the most famous biblical character that we have. His origin story, when God was looking for the next king, he goes to the family of David, to Jessie, his dad.

And he says, "Hey, I think that the next king of Israel might be one of your boys. And Jessie is like, "Well, that sounds right. I have a great family." And he brings out all of his boys and they go one by one from the oldest. He's like, "What about him?" And he is like, "No, that's not him." He's like, "Okay, what about him?" "No, that's not him."

"Him?"

"No, not him."

And then finally he's like, "None of them are him. Do you have any other sons?" And he's like, "Oh, we do. We do. We have one more. He's more of an outside cat though. He's out in the field right now. I'll get somebody to bring him in. I don't think you would want him, though."

They bring David in and at first glance God says, "Yes, that's the one. That's the one I want, the runt of the family. Man sees the outward appearance. God sees the heart."

And you would see this followed up in David's story. As he begins to grow a little bit older the people are in a war. They're fighting the Philistines.

Some of you know the story of Goliath. He's standing in front of all of the people of God. And all they have to do is present one person to fight. Whoever wins the battle wins the war. And no one will go forward and fight Goliath.

David, just this little boy bringing lunch to his brothers, who hears what this guy is saying, and he's offended. He's like who is this giant talking to? "Hey, who do you think you are?" And everyone is like, "Chill out, man."

"Why are you so afraid, letting him talk about God like this?"

"Well, they are waiting for someone to be brave enough to go and fight him."

He's like, "I'll fight him."

"You should be quiet, man. You are not fighting a giant. You are a boy."

And he's like, "I know who my God is and I know if I step forward in the power of God we will win this battle."

And he steps forward. A little boy fights a giant. And in a matter of seconds the giant falls and God defeats Goliath.

David did not defeat Goliath. No one was supposed to read that story and be like, "Wow, what a prodigy David must have been that he could take down a giant." No, it was the Spirit of God who was upon him and allowed him to win. God wanted all of the credit and all of the glory.

Think about how He operated with His people. Whenever they would go to battles it was never like God said, "I'm going to send the best of the best. You go and win."

No, they get to Jericho and they are waiting like, "God, what should I do? What should I do?" God was like, "Here's the plan. Listen tight. I want you all to get together and I want you to walk around the city seven times."

They were like, "That's it? Just walk around the city." "No, no, no. Take the horn too and blow it as you go." And as they walk around the city the walls fall completely.

The point of the story was not to say, "Well, I wonder how they were walking? I bet they were walking really hard, marching back and forth. And they walked so hard that the walls fell." No, God was showing that His strength works perfectly in weakness. He wants it to be clear that it's Him.

Think about when God rescued His people from Egypt. He removed them from slavery. And the Egyptian army is coming down on them. And they are standing at the sea. And what happens? They walk through walls of water.

The point of the story wasn't to say, "Oh, they must have gotten to the Red Sea at the right time, just the right time to see it really kind of open." No, no, no. God opened the walls of water that they walked through. God did that.

That is the story of the Bible. And that is God's M.O. You and I come in our weakness and you and I, we show up but it is very clear God is the One who saves the day. It is God's power working in our weakness. It's what this whole thing is about.

So, if you come from humble beginnings you are a choice candidate to be used by God. If you know struggle and hardship you are a choice candidate to be used by God. If you have been rejected or neglected by the world, if you do not fit into this world, you are a choice candidate to be used by God.

Think about how the church got started, mostly from people in lower levels of society.

This was a foreign concept to a Roman controlled world. How did change come? It came from top down. The Romans were conquerors. They would go into a city with power and then take control.

But not in God's kingdom, the cities back then, like Corinth, were changing, not from the top to the bottom, but from the bottom to the top. You couldn't buy what was happening. The church in the wild was growing and it wasn't through power. It was through weakness and sacrifice and love.

Through the message of the cross they became more than conquerors. They became a church in the wild and the same invitation is for me and you.

How did they do it? We already read that we can't receive this from a human standpoint. From the ways of the world we will never get to understand the wisdom of God.

What is the wisdom of God? I'm glad you asked. In verse 30 Paul is going to describe exactly what the wisdom of God is. And it may be a surprise to you. He says:

"God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit," that's important, "God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin. Therefore, as the Scriptures say, 'If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord.'" 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 (NLT)

Now, what's important here is to understand in the Greek the way that he writes the tense of the language that he used here actually reads like: godly wisdom equals these things.

So, if you are saying godly wisdom is to be right with God and it is to be holy and it is to be free, it's to know these things and to experience these things, that's what it means to have godly wisdom.

This is all for our benefit. So, to be right with God means to be justified, to be made right before God. And when you think about this, this was an act of God that He did. And how different that is in our world and their world. Any time you had to justify yourself it was through your power and what you could do and how you could prove yourself.

But the message of the cross is that Jesus went to the cross, died the death you deserved, was raised from the dead, defeated sin and death, and justified you. It was His work that justified you. Paul is saying that is what wisdom is.

And then it says holy, which equals sanctified. So, sanctified just means to be made holy and holy just means to be separated, to be set apart for a specific purpose.

To understand godly wisdom is to know that you have been justified, but He didn't just leave you there. Now, you are being sanctified. You have been saved from something for something. You have been set apart from sin and set apart for the mission of God.

You want to know what your purpose is in life? It is far bigger than any title that can fit on your door frame or on your name tag. You are a son or a daughter of God. You have been entrusted with the keys of the kingdom. You are loved and you are a part of His mission. That is what your life is about.

And then he says freed, which means liberated. And the word that is used here is redeemed. Redeemed was a word that was used when someone was bought out of slavery.

So, what Paul is saying here in this quick line is that if you want to know godly wisdom it's to understand how you were justified, it's to understand that you have and continue to be sanctified, and that you have been liberated, meaning that you have been rescued from slavery, a slave to sin and the power of sin. Now you have power over all of it. This is what it means to have godly wisdom.

And the thing that comes to my mind when you think about all of this, the message of the cross, is that God's ways are different than your ways.

God chose you. And I want you to think about how you were justified, how you are sanctified, and why you were liberated. You have nothing to do with it.

God justified you. God sanctifies you. God liberated you. All of this is a work of God, one that we can't take any credit for. So he says, "Don't boast about it. If you want to boast, boast about God." Boast about His grace.

Grace is something that is unique to Christians. It is very unique to this world. The message of the cross is that God would die for you. Why? Because you deserve it? No. Because He loves you. He picked you. Why? Because you were great and clever and you looked good? No. Because He loves you.

The message of the cross is one of grace. It was God's strength in weakness. God, the most powerful being in the universe, would choose to become powerless on your behalf.

Now, I want you to think about how, when your life is no longer about you justifying yourself and you liberating yourself and you setting yourself apart from the crowd, when

God takes all of that, that frees you up. Grace becomes the most clear thing about your life, of why you are where you are. It unites us together.

Look at what Paul says in the second letter to the Corinthians. The second letter that he's going to write to them talks all about this. He says:

"But he said to me, 'My grace,'" and this is God speaking, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

My power is not made perfect in your strength. My power is made perfect in weakness.

"Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that," that's important, "Christ's power may rest on me."

I feel like so many of us, as Christians, live a powerless life because we believe that to have power means that we need to bring strength and we need to prove ourselves and we need to justify ourselves and we just need to work a little bit harder. But what you see here is this: he is glad about his weakness so that it makes room for Christ's power.

And when we do that, when we are aware of our shortcomings, aware of how far God had to come to get us, it says that that is where the Spirit of God dwells. That is where He rests. And that's where the power is. He says,"

"That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." 2 Corinthians 12:9-11 (NIV)

That is the message of the cross. When your relationships are built on strength they can only be as strong as you are. And without acknowledging our need, acknowledging that we need help, acknowledging that we need a Savior, not just that one day when we confessed our faith, but every single day.

The day we pretend that we don't need the message of the cross, is the day that we live a powerless life. We leave on the table the gift of grace.

Now, I want to be very clear about what I'm talking about, what grace is:

Grace is the power of God to fulfill what we lack.

Grace is strength in weakness. Grace is when God's Spirit rests on us and allows us to do things that we could never do on our own.

The Christian life is not about reaching independence. The goal isn't to move out when you turn 18. The Christian life is about coming to the end of ourselves and become painfully aware of how dependent upon God we really are.

Can you see how embracing our weaknesses would unite us with God and one another?



I want you to think about it like this. “What if I could live in a world where my shortcomings didn’t just highlight my weaknesses?”

I feel like this is why so much of the power of God is stripped. Because this is what it feels like to be exposed as weak. Right? It feels like the spotlight is on you. It feels like the attention is on you for all of the wrong reasons.

And we squirm and we hate feeling vulnerable, we hate feeling weak. So what do we do? We justify ourselves. We separate ourselves. We try to liberate ourselves from this feeling of being weak.

But what happens? Usually we isolate ourselves from other people because we feel weak, we feel like we don’t deserve to be around them. It’s just a matter of time. There is nothing to do with our weakness.

And the same thing applies to God. When we feel like it’s all us and we have to work our way to get to God and then we quickly realize we’re not making any ground, we stop and we lose and we feel lost and we feel empty.

And what the message of the cross does is it allows us to do something with our weakness. We have somewhere to take them. We have the grace of God.

Think about this. What if my shortcomings didn’t just point to me? What if they weren’t just a spot light on me? What if my sins and my failures and my struggles—what if they pointed not to my weakness but to God’s strength?

What if now, because of my life in Jesus—I’ve received His wisdom: justified, sanctified, and liberated—what if now my life, my weaknesses, were not ending on me but they are a constant connection to the cross?

What if my life was not just about my weaknesses and how far I have to go to get to God, but what if my weaknesses were a reminder of far God came to get to me? What if my life wasn’t about how bad I was, but about how loved I am?

What happens when we follow Jesus is that now our stories can no longer be separated from the cross. So, now when I tell my story, when I tell my weaknesses, it is an invitation to be reminded of the cross. It’s to be reminded of God’s goodness. It’s to be reminded of all that He did.

And now the cross overshadows my sins. The cross overshadows all of the things I wish I wouldn’t have done, all of the things that I’m afraid to mention are cast in front of the cross. In this life, the cross overshadows them.

And when I’m reminded of my sin I’m reminded that Jesus took my place on the cross. That He has already justified me before God. He has already sanctified me through His Spirit. And I am liberated once and for all.

The problem in a powerless faith is when we come to the cross with full hands trying our best to be perfect and good enough to get this close to the cross and to get this close to God.

But, can I just say this? The cross does not need our feeble attempts at a perfect life. It doesn't need our attempts at perfection to protect the cross. The cross already has One who perfectly laid on it. That's the only One it needs.

What it needs from me and you is to come to it empty handed and to cling to it and to be a reminder that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisest of this world.

And even though it feels like weakness, it feels like vulnerability, this is the place of greatest strength. And this is where our God chose to meet us. And every single day we have the message of the cross.

The message of the cross is not just for those of us who grew up in the church or who have been around for a while or have a decent life. The beauty and the message of the cross is that it is for the Jews and the Gentiles, it is for all people.

And the message of the cross is available to all people today. You don't get access to it because of how good you are or how good your day is going to this point. You get to it completely by the saving work of Jesus on the cross.

I know it sounds foolish. That God would become a man. A God who would live a perfect life and then show His godliness by choosing to die on a cross. And this same God would choose to show His power by resurrecting three days later.

And this God would choose normal people like me and you to be His ambassadors to literally transform this earth into heaven. I know it sounds too good to be true. It sounds foolish.

But, what if it is not? What if on the other side of this message is the greatest life? What if on the other side of this message is an answer to every ache you've ever experienced? What if on the other side of this message is a power like none you've ever experienced? What if on the other side of this message you get to experience unity with God and with others?

That's why I'm pleading with you through my foolish preaching today that you would come and respond, not to me, but to the message of the cross.

There is a heavenly Father who loves you and wants you. He has chosen to justify you. It's not on you. He's already done the work. He has a plan and a purpose, a unique one, for your life. He will redeem you completely and use you in beautiful ways.

What you have to do is to respond in faith, to believe that He is who He says He is. And you can do that today. Please, at all of our campuses, don't leave without talking to



someone. We are going to have a team of people at every stage at every campus. Come forward. We would love to celebrate and pray with you.

And for all of us, we're going to close today by standing. We're going to stand as we go into worship. We're going to stand unified, because we're going to be reminded of the message of the cross.

We're going to be reminded of our good King who became the lowest of lows, who became a servant and who died a criminal's death and now welcomes all people into His kingdom through humility.

This good God has done all of the things that needed to be done. He is our King. He is our King Jesus. And all allegiance is pledged to Him. That is what we are standing in in this moment.

I'm going to pray and then I'm going to encourage you to worship and to be reminded of how good the message is. So, right where you are, close your eyes, bow your heads. Let us pray together.

Father, we thank You so much for this morning. God, we thank You for the message of the cross. God, we know it sounds foolish. And if we're being honest, it can even sound foolish to us sometimes.

But, God, I pray that it would be the message, the most important message, it would be the truest message in our lives.

And it shows us who You are, God. You couldn't make sense of our lives separated from the cross. Our lives don't make sense outside of the cross. We are only where we are because of You and Your goodness and Your grace.

We only get to heaven because of You. We only get the good things in life because of You. So, we acknowledge You.

God, I pray that we don't miss the sign. Your Son on a cross. Our King on a cross. Strength in weakness.

God, in this moment we are standing together united under Your name, pledging allegiance to You. King Jesus, we worship You and You alone. It is in Your perfect and holy name we pray. And the church says: Amen.

