

Joyful Clarity and Simplicity

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 14: 12 – 20

May 10th, 2020 – Mothers' Day

The city of Corinth was the city in the ancient world that had it all! Corinth was the Las Vegas or the Disney World or the New Orleans of its time! It was all of those things and much more. It was a crowded piece of real estate in southern Greece. In Corinth, you could see it all, experience it all, and do it all! Corinth was a city many of us would vacation too!

Into this city in the first century walked a preacher named Paul. Paul presented the Gospel to them. Paul told stories about Jesus Christ. The people in Corinth listened to Paul's preaching and they saw this new religion as a kind of marriage between Judaism, Greek Philosophy, and the mystery of Asian religions. They confused Christianity with much stuff and this created confusion and many problems for the early believers in Corinth.

They wrote Paul many letters concerning these problems and Paul's responses make up 1st and 2nd Corinthians.

In our scripture reading today from 1st Corinthians, Paul addresses some of their problems of which one is peaking in tongues. Some of the Corinthian church believed and taught that Christian joy was all about emotional experiences. Christian joy was found in speaking in tongues!

To counter this, Paul wrote back that priority #1 in the church is not so much to feel good when the church is gathered for worship, but to do good and speak the Gospel clearly when the church is out among Corinthian society.

Let me repeat that: priority #1 for the church, our church, is not so much to feel good when the church is gathered for worship, but to do good and speak the Gospel clearly when the church is out amongst the world.

Paul told the church in Corinth that the purpose of worship is not for us to enjoy the service, as if we bought a ticket to a Broadway show. The purpose of worship is to glorify the Almighty God and to be challenged by the Holy Spirit to speak the Gospel clearly by living a joyful life.

Paul is also telling us that the purpose of our worship is not for us to enjoy the service, as if we bought a ticket to a show. The purpose of our worship is to glorify the Almighty God and to challenge us to speak the Gospel clearly by living a joyful life.

In another words – purpose of worship is not to feel good but to do good and speak the Gospel clearly!

I think I need to learn from Paul also. I often try to produce a message in which you will be entertained and you will enjoy as if you were paying to see the show. Maybe I need to focus more on glorifying God and challenging you to live a life of joy. Maybe?

The best photograph you could ever take of a church would not be of people streaming into the church's front doors. NO! The best picture of a church is one where the doors open as the people leave to serve. The best picture is the joyful picture of people going out of the church to serve Jesus Christ.

In a word, Paul called the Corinthian church to clarity! Paul said – *In the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words spoken in tongues!*

We must find simple clarity in our faith.

There are some in the Christian faith who think that a mature faith is complex, that a mature faith is dense, that a mature faith is ambiguous, and even that a mature faith is obtuse. They suggest that the more obscure you can be about faith, the more insightful is your faith. They suggest that the more complex you can be about faith, the more profound is your faith. They suggest the denser you can be about faith, the deeper is your faith. My friends they are WRONG!

Simplicity and clarity are the keys! Simplicity and clarity are the keys to a strong faith in Christ!

Think of this statement of faith, notice how simple and clear it is: *Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, soul, and mind; and love your neighbor as yourself!* Simple and clear!

Want a strong faith in Jesus Christ, keep it simple and clear!

In the 12th century a great theologian was asked near the end of his life – ‘What is the most profound thought you ever had?’ The famous theologian sat still for some time thinking about his response. The questioner got his pencil and paper ready to write his response. The great theologian cleared his throat and said *‘Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so!’*

Simple and clear! Isn’t it amazing, the more our faith matures – the clearer it can become! Simplicity and clarity!

A sign of a mature church is clarity. That is clarity of vision. That is clarity of mission. And that is clarity of purpose. A church must commit to reaching people in the community where God has placed it. Their message must be simple and clear. Our message must be joyful clarity of purpose, ministry, and mission. When people see us and talk with us, what they long to see coming from us is a joyful clarity about the simplicity of faith in Jesus Christ. A faith in Christ is not rocket science! A faith in Christ is joyful clarity and simplicity!

When you think about it, joyful clarity is needed in almost every aspect of our lives. Think about a business – in business, clarity is needed from every person who works there. Everyone in a business needs to know the mission of the company, needs to know their customers, and needs to know their purpose. Clarity is needed in business and in a church.

This joyful clarity is also needed in the rearing of children. Your children do not need 75% of what you think they need. They do not need more toys or an Ivy League education. They do not need a new car or designer cloths. What they need most is clarity from you about expectations. They most need clarity about your love for them. They most need clarity about your heart and who you are serving!

When was the last time you opened your heart and let your children walk around inside you? Do you know your children's fear or have you affirmed his or her strength?

I bet you someone viewing this service today is living distant from God because he or she has been told or he or she believes that faith in Jesus Christ is difficult, complex, and hard to understand. And maybe we in the church have given them that impression that faith is complicated. I am sure we have! But my friends, the Gospel of Christ is captured in the joyful simple truth that God loves you and will never let you go. Clarity and simplicity – God loves you and God will never let you go!

Why do so many people run from the Christian faith today? Why do they run from the joyful embrace of Jesus? I think they run away because they are convinced that the Christian faith is a bunch of unintelligible gibberish! They think the Christian faith is too complicated or difficult or hard to understand.

We, in the church, did not mean to make it so, but we have communicated that to them. Maybe we should put this on our sign – ‘We un-complicate things!’

Many have shared with me that I have the ability to make faith simple and uncomplicated. I guess I am doing a good job because a faith in Christ has simplicity and clarity!

What about you today? The Gospel is a simple message from the God who hung the stars in the sky at night and who came to us in Jesus Christ. Our God is the One who hung on a cross for us and rose from the dead so that we would have eternal life.

If we will simply respond in faith, God will do the work of grace in our lives. Find this joyful clarity about the faith we celebrate, and in so doing, live a more joyful life of clarity and simplicity.

Clarity and simplicity – God loves you and will never let you go!

Today is Mothers' Day and I hope when you think of your mother, you think of the simplicity of her love for you. I hope you think of the clarity of her love for you. A mother simply is God's love in action for us. A mother clearly is LOVE!

Happy Mothers' Day!