

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-16

CHRIST CRUCIFIED

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (v. 14). Are we fools for believing that Jesus was crucified and resurrected for us, or are those of this world fools for not believing in Jesus? Our reading says those who are not worshiping Christ Jesus as their risen Saviour are the fools.

Yet, I wonder. What do we do with this spiritually discerned knowledge that Jesus is risen from the dead once we say that we believe it? How do you live your life as a Christian outside of the Sunday church service? Today I want you to clearly hear that Christ Jesus died and rose for you, and let that impact your life, and don't just sit there and blankly stare at me.

To help you to think about where you sit, or stand, I'll start with an illustration from the Lord of the Rings written by J. R. R. Tolkien. We pick up at a point where a group is running for their lives. They're being chased through a mine by a creature that is reminiscent of Satan. It's called a Balrog. These novels, even though fantasy, are Christian novels with the Christian message lying underneath. If you have eyes to see, you'll see it.

Gandalf the Grey is a Christ figure and he defeats the Balrog by breaking the bridge upon which it stood. As it falls to it's death it snares Gandalf's ankle with its fiery whip and drags him over the edge. Gandalf grabbed onto the ledge, but he could only hold on for a brief moment. Gandalf's final words before plummeting to his death were, "Fly, you fools."

For all they knew Gandalf had just died to save them from the Balrog, but other enemies were still coming to kill them, and yet they just stood there, and so with his dying words Gandalf had to tell them to keep on running away from their enemies if they wanted to live, and his death was to serve any purpose. Little did they know that Gandalf the Grey would be resurrected as Gandalf the White. Little could they believe it. Little did they do but stumble away, sit down and feel that all was lost.

How do you respond to the Christian message that Jesus died for you, and then rose from the dead for you? How are you feeling right now? Do you feel that all is lost? Do you believe that Jesus came back to life from the dead for you? Listen to what Paul writes in the chapter before our text as to what people were thinking.

“The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ... For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and

folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

It might sound foolish to you. It sounds foolish to those who are outside of the church. You might not want to sound like a fool to them, and so you keep this knowledge to yourself. Why tell people that Jesus died and rose from the grave for them so that they may have eternal life, if they’ll only laugh at you, hate you, curse you, or maybe even kill you. Keep the message to yourself. Just stumble out of church, and sit down quietly in your home. The Christian life is too hard for many. Many need Jesus to look at them and say, “Fly, you fools!” You need to keep on going, and not just sit down and give up.

Don’t just look at the death of Jesus as the loss of all hope, but look at the death and resurrection of Jesus as the cause of all hope. Don’t just think about this as a worn-out phrase, but really dwell on what happened and what that means for you and me. To help you with that I’m going to take you through it again, and stop along the way and contemplate it myself. Now, because you’re sitting there you have no choice but to join me on this journey, but I hope that you’ll join me in an active way, actively thinking about the scriptures that I read, thinking them through with me, now and afterwards throughout your lives.

“Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let Him be crucified!" And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let Him be crucified!" So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves." And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"” – Matthew 27:(22-25). The ironic thing is that the blood of this innocent Man was placed upon them, and on us. Jesus’ blood cleanses us from all our sins. But like fools they said those words not realizing what they meant.

“It was the third hour when they crucified Him. And the inscription of the charge against Him read, "The King of the Jews." And with Him they crucified two robbers, one on His right and one on His left. And those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads and saying, "Aha! You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself, and come down from the cross!" So also the chief priests with the scribes mocked Him to one another, saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, come down now from the cross that we may see and believe." Those who were crucified with Him also reviled Him” – Mark 15:(25-32). It all sounds foolish at this point, like watching Gandalf fall to His death. What was the point of it all?

“Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee.” – Mark 16(:5-7). Can you believe it? Jesus rose from the dead to life everlasting! Do you have the courage to go and tell others?

Later Peter preached his first sermon saying, “This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ... Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.” – Acts 2(:32, 36-39).

For you who have repented and have been baptized receiving the forgiveness of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit do you believe that this forgiveness that you hear from me is God’s forgiveness to you?

Later, “Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by Him this man is standing before you well. ... So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” Acts 4(:8-10, 18-20). Has someone silenced you from speaking or teaching in Jesus’ name, or do you speak of what you see and hear in church?

Paul wrote, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” Galatians 2(:20). How is that possible, to live a life with Christ living in you?

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” Romans 6(:3-4).

“Far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” – Galatians 6:14a. Amen.