

3rd Sunday in Lent – B

LSB #709

Text – 1 Corinthians 1:27

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;

FOOLISH & WEAK

The new family in the neighborhood overslept, & their six-year-old daughter missed her school bus. The father, although late for work, said he'd drive her there but he needed directions to get to the school. They rode several blocks before she told him to turn the first time, several more before she indicated another turn. This went on for 20 minutes.

When they finally reached the school, it proved to be only a short distance from their home. The father was quite annoyed, so he asked his daughter why she'd led him around on such a wild goose chase. The child explained, "That's the way the school bus goes, Daddy. It's the only way I know."

It's kind of a cute story. It's sort of a funny story, & it's also a story that touches your heart because of the way it reveals our quickness to judge. Have you ever been in a situation where you were impatient with someone? How you ever judged a person, maybe as foolish & weak, because they didn't seem to know what they were doing?

The answer is clearly – quite often, & I don't need proof of it. All I have to do is understand the sinful human nature, & then I can call any of us a liar if we're denying that we judge others. God has written the Law on our hearts to convict us of our own sins, but our sinful nature twists the Law written there, so that we use it instead, to unfairly judge others.

As we turn to God for strength of faith, we can resist that urge to judge, but we cannot eliminate it. Sin is what sinners do. Judging others, unfairly, is what sinners do, & God allows us to do so because, sadly, that's a most effective way of teaching us, of motivating us, to fight against that sinful urge. When we've hurt someone we love, by judging them unfairly, like the father judged his daughter about the directions she gave to school, it's then that we see the hurt & pain our sinful nature causes others. Unfortunately, because our sinful nature blinds us, it often takes that kind of injury for us to see, & honestly admit, our own sin.

It is much easier to call someone else weak, & a fool. We're much quicker to judge & point out the mistakes of others, then we are to do the far more difficult work of taking the plank out of our own eye. Haven't you been confronted with a clear sin of yours & found yourself struggling with seeing your sin; resisting against admitting your sin?

Excuses come so naturally because we're afraid of admitting we need help. To ask for help carries the implication that we're weak. Our sinful pride gets in the way of receiving the blessings our heavenly Father would give to us because we prefer to get them ourselves. It's repugnant to admit that we're weak, so we project that status upon others & deny it of ourselves.

Given that attitude it's easy to understand why we struggle in accepting Paul's words from 2 Corinthians, "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." Faithful Christians understand that weakness is not our enemy.

As we recognize our weakness God's Spirit directs us back to our Father in heaven for His strength. If we don't recognize our weakness we rely upon our own strength, & then our sinful nature leads us astray no matter how wise our decisions appear to our own eyes.

And since it's already difficult considering weakness to be a good thing, imagine how well we take to appreciating being the fool. How much do you enjoy being laughed at? That's such a difficult pill to swallow, that people who become good at it often make successful comedians. Foolishness is not a desired character trait in any other occupation. Yet, having the ability to laugh at oneself is a sign of a healthy psychological profile. Laughing at yourself can be a reflection of how well you're able to admit your own devious & sinful ways. After all, if you can't admit them, how can you laugh at the foolishness of them? People who take themselves too seriously commonly struggle in accepting that their sins are truly forgiven.

That tendency to laugh at others & not at ourselves is a result of the fall into sin. The predisposition to picking a speck out of someone else's eye, while we still have the log in ours, is a result of our sinful nature. It is my fallen nature to minimize the accomplishments of others, & to build up or boast about my own.

To counter that, "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong..." Two thousand years ago, if Jesus had come as a mighty king, many would gladly have followed Him, but they'd have followed Him for the wrong reasons, like pride & arrogance.

Instead, God chose the weak to shame the strong, because He knew that we'd twist things in order to boast of ourselves. The effects of sin did not surprise God,

though we are constantly amazed by how wrongly our best intentions turn out. Our Father in heaven knew the corruption sin would bring & knew the cost He'd pay to make things right again.

As sinful human beings we want power & majesty. "Jews demand signs & Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified..." God chose the foolishness & the weakness of death on the cross to shame the wise & the strong, to humble them, that we might turn away from our accomplishments, & back to those of Jesus, in order to be saved.

God purposely chooses to work against the standards & the expectations of this world, "...so that no human being might boast in the presence of God... so that, as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'" Our world trumpets wealth & success. Jesus trumpets mercy & humility, saying that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor in spirit. That message often leaves us wondering & wavering, fearful for our welfare. Yet the news that God chooses the weak & the foolish is only bad news if we have an over inflated opinion of ourselves.

If we see ourselves as we truly are, foolish & weak, then the fact that God chooses them gives us hope. It gives hope because if God will choose the least of these, then how could we fail to qualify? No matter how far we've fallen, no matter how grotesque our sin, no matter how weak our faith, no one can snatch us out of the hand of our Father in heaven.

It's true, that fact leaves no room for pride in our own accomplishments, but any such pride is nothing more than a lie, a lie of the devil himself. Like the Jews of old, we

too find it easier to “believe” if there are signs & wonders. Like the Greeks of old, it’s much more flattering if the religion we “believe” is filled with unquestionable wisdom.

But the wisdom & power we as sinful beings are so naturally drawn to, will not help us in the battle against the twisted nature we were born with. Human wisdom & power only destroy. It takes the wisdom of Christ to bring healing to a world that runs backwards because of sin. Only in the wisdom given to us by our Savior can we hope to accomplish anything good.

If those who know us recognize that our faith walk, is roundabout & slow, we can proudly say, “It’s the only way we know,” because of Who we know, Jesus Christ, who works through the foolish & weak in order save sinners like us.

If people ridicule us because of the foolish & weak concepts that our Lord & Savior teaches, like forgiving those who hurt us, we can still rest in God’s love because He told us that this is His plan. Even the means of grace, Baptism, Holy Communion & the Word of God, appear weak & foolish to a world obsessed with being entertained.

Christians however, rejoice in the truth that Jesus has done it all, when it comes to our salvation. Jesus has told us, “It is finished.” & it’s in that message, in that Gospel, that good news, that the poor & lowly sinners we are can truly find rest from all our weaknesses & rest from all our foolishness, & all our sorrows.

Beware, the next time you’re tempted to judge someone as being a bit slow. It may be they’re living the only way they know, as weak & foolish, yet forgiven children of God. May that weakness & foolishness be ours as well. Amen.

Perverse & foolish, oft I strayed, but yet in love He sought me, & on His
shoulder gently laid & home rejoicing brought me. The King of love my Shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never; I nothing lack if I am His & He is mine forever. Amen.