



Church ON Purpose

Sermon Growth Guide

January 21, 2024

Call Him Savior and Lord



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1 Corinthians 2:1-13

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 2:7

“No, we declare God’s wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.”

Big Idea: Through the Spirit’s power, we share Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Foundations

This week, we step into another week of what means for us to be a **Church on Purpose!**

In First Corinthians 2:1-13, the Apostle Paul addresses the Corinthian Christians, highlighting the stark difference between divine wisdom and worldly knowledge. He rejects the idea that the good news of Jesus came to them through impressive speech or persuasive rhetoric. Rather, he makes much of the Holy Spirit’s power—stressing that true wisdom comes from God.

The Holy Spirit, who knows the depths of God, reveals this wisdom to all believers, enabling them to comprehend spiritual truths. As such, relying on God’s wisdom rather than the limited understanding of the world is the name of the game when it comes to sharing Christ with others.

This week we are exhorted to rely on the Spirit for discernment and acknowledge the profound mysteries that God unveils to those who seek His wisdom. How important this is to God’s sons and daughters who are called to declare “Jesus is Lord!”

Understanding God’s Word

Read verses 1-5. What does Paul say is the central truth of his life? Why do you think he did not place his confidence in his own power of persuasion or wisdom? What does this passage tell us about where Paul’s hope was placed?

Applying God’s Word

Reflecting on this week’s passage as a whole, how do you see the role of the Holy Spirit in sharing Jesus with others? What has been your experience? Share with your group.

Witnessing God’s Word

Tim ended his sermon with this question: “Who do you know who needs to know Jesus?” Pray for them this week. Explore with Jesus how He might want to use you in them coming to know Him.

We are planting a new church! It's called First Pres, and it meets right here. Last week I asked you to imagine we were launching a church together, a new movement to reach Colorado Springs for Christ. Here is our method, this cheat code card, our way to do **Church on Purpose**. Community Members become Participants. Strangers become people we know. Participants. Will they come to **Call Him Savior and Lord**?

How will the people you know come to know Jesus? Our evangelism strategy depends on a three-legged stool. We believe in people coming to Christ in worship, for sure. But how do they get to that point and have their questions answered along the way? We teach a three-legged stool: neighboring, spiritual conversations, and Alpha. Years ago, Dave Runyon came to train us in the art of neighboring, knowing your neighbors. One elder still has this magnet on his refrigerator as a way to remember neighbors' names and pray for them. Neighboring, Spiritual Conversations (we had training by Don Everts), and Alpha Course, a series of meetings and meals to foster open questions about faith in Christ. We just started the current Alpha on Thursday with nineteen guests. You could still jump in. It all starts with knowing our Community Members. Community Members are strangers. Once you know them, we call them Participants. Participants know about First Pres and we know their name (and email, and address; and we send stuff to them). How will the people you know come to know Jesus? The Scripture says only God can do that, but we get to play a part.

How will Corinthians come to know Jesus? Not by some show of splashy rhetoric and philosophical argumentation. "And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

(1 Corinthians 2:1-2) Does that mean we don't care how we present the gospel? We don't choose our words? We don't create a suitable environment? Of course we do. We do all we can to remove obstacles of all kinds. But you don't trick someone into Jesus. You don't sell someone into Jesus. "My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power." (1 Corinthians 2:4-5) The Spirit's power, God's power, that is the power that opens a mind, opens a heart, turns on the lights. You may have heard about Jesus all your life, even memorized Scripture, but until the Spirit of God turns the lights on by His power, you're in the dark.

Paul asks, do you know your Corinthians? They rest in their wisdom. We all have our wisdoms, our worldviews, our cultural narratives—the stories we tell ourselves to make sense of life. We talked about a few of them last week. God's wisdom is totally different from our little wisdoms. Paul is being a little sarcastic here when he says, "we do speak a message of wisdom." Corinthians loved wisdom. They loved knowing they were the wise, not the simple nincompoops. They loved the wisdom of the mature. Paul says, "You like the wisdom of the mature? Sure, I'll show you what it is—what it *really* is." They liked hidden wisdom, secret wisdom, insight they knew that nobody else knew to puff up their pride. Paul says, sure, I'll give you some of that. Really hidden wisdom. "We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began." (1 Corinthians 2:6-7) What is hidden is God's wisdom, until it is revealed. What is hidden is the realities of spiritual things; they ring like foolishness, they sound like

worthless fantasy, right up until they mean everything. That takes the work of the Holy Spirit. “What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.” (1 Corinthians 2:12-13) When you learn a foreign language, you don’t just memorize a list of alternative words; you enter another world. The Spirit pulls us into a new world. Spiritual things in spiritual language by spiritual power. That’s how God’s wisdom comes. And when that comes, the human wisdom we had, it’s like holding a candle on the beach when the sun comes up. You realize how insufficient it was. The gospel isn’t secret knowledge to puff up our pride; the gospel is revealed knowledge that drives us to our knees in humility.

That’s your Corinthians. Do you know your Corinthians? They love wisdom. How about your Colorado Springsians? Last week we talked about four cultural narratives, four “wisdoms”: Expressive Individualism, where the greatest virtue is to be uncompromisingly self-centered, “You do you, boo.” Materialistic Naturalism says you are nothing more than a magic meatball, live and plan your life accordingly. The narrative around Justice and Power says, “Might makes right,” and just plain old Hedonism, “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die.” None of these is new, and at some point, they just fall apart. They just don’t have the explanatory power to make sense of life. The expressive individualist says, “I tried to live out my authentic self, and it turns out I can’t be trusted. Which self am I supposed to be? The one I feel like being or the one I know I ought to be?” I can’t really see myself as a magic meatball. Don’t we all know there is more to life than biological functions? The justice and power wheel doesn’t really work either. Just because

someone is on top with the most power and influence doesn’t make my morals right, and revolution just puts new people on top and others on bottom. It doesn’t really satisfy justice and peace. They fall apart.

There are other ways things fall apart, too. Whenever a good thing becomes an ultimate thing, you are headed for disappointment and collapse. Maybe you enjoy work and you are having some success. That’s wonderful. But if you don’t have God in your life, work can become your god. It can become an idol. Then, if you lose it, you will utterly collapse in despair. Or relationships. Maybe you have a girlfriend or boyfriend, maybe your marriage is everything to you, your spouse is your all. If you have Jesus in your life, you can see that this thing, this good thing, it is not the ultimate thing. But when you make it the ultimate thing, what happens when you lose that relationship? What happens when the marriage is not fully satisfying? What happens if your spouse dies? You utterly collapse, see? This is what people are doing all around you. Are you standing close enough to them to know that? Are you near enough to them to say a word about Jesus when their whole world falls in?

Some pastors describe this feeling, when your worldview doesn’t hold, as like a suit that doesn’t quite fit and keeps pinching, or like a blanket that won’t cover your toes when you pull it up to your chin, but it’s more than that. When the beliefs you have used to organize your life, everything you have built your world on, the story you have been telling yourself all this time, when all of that is suddenly insufficient, suddenly bankrupt, that’s much more than an uncomfortable feeling. It’s more like coming to that last stair a little lower than the rest, and your heart jumps; the panic of leaning back to sit down and wondering if there is a chair. Only it’s your whole life, laced with anxiety. Soren Kierkegaard said it is something

we all face. His followers named it the existential crisis. It is the defining moment of crisis in which we rise or fall depending on our response to Jesus.

So here is the question. What are you going to do when your friend hits the moment of crisis? Or, the first question is, what are you going to do when you realize you have been putting too much weight on the wrong foot, when you realize you have accidentally allowed something to creep into the center where only Jesus is rightfully seated? Will you collapse or return to Him? But, for our mission to reach Colorado Springs for Christ, to be Light and Life for the City, what will you do when your neighbor's story collapses in on itself? We want to be there. We want to be present, right there beside them, so the grace of Jesus can pour in and fill that gap.

I think my favorite evangelism story so far from my time at First Pres is what I call the dead cat story. A family in this church were home one day when the neighbor knocked on the door. "Can I borrow a shovel?" the man asked. "Sure. What's going on?" The neighbor welled up with tears and said, "Our cat died last night. We need to bury her." Then he asked, "Hey, you're Christian right? You're spiritual. Would you say a few prayers?" The First Pres guy thought, "I don't really have any resources for this. Is there a liturgy for burying a cat?" But what he said was, "Sure." They did it. It started a deeper friendship. The neighbor, it turns out, was raised Christian but had walked away from it and his wife was never exposed to the gospel. In fact, after a few months of attending church with their friends, she asked me, "I hear you say 'the gospel' and I hear you talk about 'the gospels.' What's the difference?" It was all new to her. The husband renewed his faith. The wife committed her life to Christ, and one day she, her son, and her twin infants were all baptized together right here. Both families have moved away, but that's just about my favorite story of being there.

How will the people you know come to know Jesus? We worry about having the right words, or being able to explain everything correctly, or we worry about being caught without the answers to the tough questions. Then won't I look like a fool? Who cares? People need Jesus. You, by grace, know Jesus. That's enough. When the worldview proves insufficient, when the cultural narrative falls short, when the crisis comes, be near enough to share Jesus. Time and again it happens. Participants become Worshipers. People on the margins see Jesus and come to realize that He and / he alone is worthy of praise, worthy to sit in the center seat, strong enough to hold up their life. They come to call Him Savior and Lord.

Jesus has proven He is worthy. When we were far from God, lost in our own self-destruction and sin, spinning apart in our own existential crisis of our own making, what did Jesus do? He came down from heaven and took on flesh to walk with us, to be near. The truth is, to know God, we need spiritual words. "This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words." (1 Corinthians 2:13) Jesus came to bring the knowledge of God to us in a way we could understand and receive it, to accommodate God's realities to our capacity for understanding. He is the Word made flesh. But even more, Jesus took our place. To save us for eternal life, Jesus went into the crisis on our behalf. As the old creed says, "He descended into hell." When He died on the cross, with all our sins on Him, Jesus descended into the existential abyss, total separation from God the Father, eternal death. Jesus took on eternal death, experienced it fully, on our behalf, so we could rest in the assurance of eternal life. That's what it means to say He died and rose again for us. That is why we call Him Savior and Lord. Last week we thought of one name. Who do you know who needs to know Jesus? You don't have to have all the answers. Just be near enough to share Jesus.