



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany (C) – 1 Corinthians 2:1-12[13-16]

Focus: *Proclaiming Christ*

word of life

“My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5 NRSV)

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-16

Paul traveled on his missionary trips to proclaim Christ crucified. In his letter to the Corinthians, he briefly reflects on his understanding of his call to proclaim the gospel. He addresses his reflection to a congregation with whom he is well acquainted. Paul writes, “When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2:1-2 NRSV)

1. *What do you know about Paul and his preaching?*
2. *What does Paul mean when he writes “to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified”?*

There are many ways to try to persuade, but not all techniques are successful. Paul reminds the Corinthians of his own approach. He did not proclaim Christ using force or lofty words. Nor did he try to dazzle them with his eloquence. Instead Paul came with vulnerability and offered his words as a gift. Paul writes, “And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.” (1 Corinthians 2:3 NRSV)

Paul is often portrayed as a forceful presence, one who passionately persecuted the early Christians before his conversion, after which he even more fervently proclaimed the gospel message. It is worth pausing to ponder Paul’s approach with the Corinthians. Take a moment to picture Paul in weakness, fear, and much trembling.

3. *Describe Paul and his different approaches to the task of proclamation.*
4. *Why might Paul have used this approach with the Corinthians?*
5. *What might we learn from Paul about adjusting the message based on the intended audience?*

The Corinthians seemed to have been struggling with the concept of wisdom. Paul painstakingly weaves in themes of wisdom in his letter to Corinthians. True wisdom comes only from God. Paul is wise enough to not rely on his own ability and words to proclaim the gospel message of Jesus Christ.

Instead, Paul can only hope to be an instrument through which God’s wisdom is proclaimed. “My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:4-5 NRSV)

Paul’s deepest hope is to not block the Spirit, but instead to allow God’s Spirit to flow through him. It is through that Spirit Paul understands his calling—to proclaim the gospel message.

6. *How do you see God’s Spirit at work in Paul?*
7. *What (if anything) have you learned new about Paul?*

Word among us

A congregation was nearing the end of a lengthy call process. They gathered to vote on the candidate recommended by the call committee. As soon as the discussion was open to the floor, hands flew up in the air. The first to reach the microphone loudly proclaimed, “I am NOT in favor of a female preacher in our pulpit.” The next person said, “I know I will not be able to hear a female’s high-pitch voice.” And so it went.

Finally, a young man in middle school went to the microphone. It was the first time he had ever spoken at a congregational meeting, but the congregation knew him well. Not only had he been baptized and confirmed at the church, he was one of the few young people left at the church. He and his family worshipped at the church weekly. So, when he spoke, the congregation listened attentively. He quietly said, “I met this pastor at camp last summer. I really want her to be my pastor.” A hush filled the room.

Shortly afterwards, the congregation voted and approved a call to this female pastor. They were persuaded by this young man who spoke with a conviction borne out of relationship with the pastor. It was hard to vote against his conviction.

1. *How much should gender influence a congregation’s choice for pastor?*
2. *What are important characteristics for a pastor?*

The female pastor heard about the discussion at the congregational meeting—both the positive and negative comments. After prayerful consideration, she accepted the call. As this pastor prepared to begin her call, she prayed for the Spirit to guide her. She knew there was nothing she could say to persuade those who doubted her ability to serve because of her gender. She could only hope to live and serve faithfully, allowing the Spirit to be her guide.

With time, the congregation and the pastor formed a healthy union, serving Christ. Some apologized for their narrow-mindedness and words spoken at the congregational meeting. The young man who spoke at the meeting continued to attend worship regularly and grow in faith, realizing how the Spirit might have used his words to bring the pastor to his congregation. Thanks be to God!

3. *Give examples of when the Holy Spirit used you to proclaim the love of Christ.*

faith practice in daily life

Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

We all may not have the opportunities to travel to distant cities as missionaries. We may not have the gift to preach and teach about Christ. But, each of us is called to be a proclaimer of the good news of God in Christ. Sometimes that proclamation happens through our words, but other times we proclaim through our deeds.

4. *As you look to the coming weeks, what opportunities might you have to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed?*

Prayer

Creator of all, open our mouths and lives so we might proclaim your wisdom revealed through Jesus Christ. Amen

last word

Take time to pray for God’s Spirit to fill your words and actions with wisdom.

Daily Faith Practices

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