



Daily Reflections

August 31, 2018

Scripture

1 Corinthians 1: 17-25

Brothers and sisters:

Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the Gospel,
and not with the wisdom of human eloquence,
so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its meaning.
The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

For it is written:

I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the learning of the learned I will set aside.

Where is the wise one?

Where is the scribe?

Where is the debater of this age?

Has not God made the wisdom of the world foolish?

For since in the wisdom of God
the world did not come to know God through wisdom,
it was the will of God through the foolishness of the proclamation
to save those who have faith.

For Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,
but we proclaim Christ crucified,
a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,
but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike,
Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom,
and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Our Scripture Reflection

Paul had his hands full when he went to Corinth to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Corinth was an affluent community with a major seaport to its east and a major land route running through the town. The citizens were Gentiles who were well educated, steeped in Greek philosophy. They enjoyed the good life by seeking pleasure and avoiding pain which made Paul's message of the Cross a real stumbling block for many of them. For some of the Corinthians, Jesus' death on the Cross was foolish and absurd. Paul would preach, however, that even though their brand of wisdom viewed the Cross as folly their thinking missed the wisdom of the Cross: To show God's love for His people. Paul would not give up on the Corinthians. He went there to "proclaim Christ crucified" and he would not give up. Despite the heartache and hardships he endured Paul remained steadfast in his work and the Church of Corinth was eventually established.

Food for your Journey

Rear Admiral Jeremiah Denton was a prisoner of war in North Vietnam. After many months in solitary confinement, his morale was flagging. His captors allowed prisoners to have nothing that reminded them of their religious faith.

Even so, Denton had a small cross another prisoner had woven out of strands of bamboo. He kept it hidden inside a propaganda pamphlet, along with a forbidden list of camp inmates. He only took the cross out at night, to hold in his hands as he prayed.

One day, in a surprise cell inspection, a guard found the little cross. With a cry of triumph, he tore it up and threw the pieces in an open sewer, glaring at Denton all the while.

Standing off to one side, silently observing the scene, was a work crew of five or six aged Vietnamese men and women. They had been brought in from outside the prison to brick up a portion of each cell's ventilation opening, as a security measure. The guards made Denton stand outside his cell while the crew completed their work.

Denton tells what happened next, in his own words: "Immediately I reached under the pallet and found the pamphlet. The list of prisoners was gone. Still angry, I began tearing the pamphlet apart. Then I felt a bulge among the pages. There was a cross. A new one, carefully and beautifully woven from the straw strands of a broom. Obviously the work crew had made it. I shuddered at the thought of the punishment they would have suffered had they been caught."

As he prayed with the new cross, Denton was awed by its power to bring even enemies together as brothers and sisters in the faith.

--Guideposts Best Loved Stories 1997: A Treasury of Guidance and Hope (Broadman & Holman, 1997).

A Prayer from the Heart

Dear Jesus, Your suffering and death on the Cross was the greatest act of love in human history. You died so that we could have the hope of living with You forever. I will show my gratitude for Your sacrificial gift by giving my life in service to You and Your people. Bless me Lord. Amen