

"Trust Requires Humility"

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

God grant us the grace to recognize just how good we've got it – in Christ – and therefore also not just how much we have to lose, but also how much we have to share. Amen.

Dear Fellow Christians: I like ice cream and I like French fries (who doesn't) but I never thought of the two as compatible, let alone complementary. Come to find out lots of people like combining ice cream and French fries, and peanut butter and pickles, and blueberries and steak. I like all of those things separately; I just never knew that they got along so well.

There are other things like that in our world – things that we know to be good all by themselves, but we never think of their interdependency or compatibility with something else. This morning we are going to explore, as our sermon title indicates, *trust* and *humility*. We immediately recognize both as good, God-pleasing attributes. When it comes to our God, Christians want to be trusting and we want to be humble. Yet seldom, if ever, do we stop to consider how interconnected and interdependent the two are. This morning we are going to explore that connection, in particular the fact that *trust requires humility*.

The text on which we will base our study is found recorded in the First Letter of Paul to the Church in Corinth, the First Chapter:

^{ESV} **1 Corinthians 1:26-31** *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 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; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."*

This is God's Word. In thankful acknowledgment that these are indeed his words, and with the confident expectation that we will benefit also this morning from the study of these words, we pray: **"Sanctify us by your truth, O Lord. Your Word is truth."** Amen.

If you were just elected president (of whatever), how or where would you start? I'd start with people. I'd gather the very best people I could find and surround myself with talent – partly because I would need good people to protect the boss from himself. That is, in fact, how most successful people operate. They surround themselves with the best and brightest. It's only the insecure that surround themselves with mediocrity, imagining that they will then look better by comparison.

Now suppose you were going to start a church. Not just any church, THE Church – the Holy Christian Church. Where would you start? Again, with people, but with whom would you begin? Whom would you gather around you? Who would be in charge in your absence? Most of us would probably agree that there too (*especially* there) we would choose carefully and pick only the very best.

But what did God do? Whom did Jesus pick for his key men? A couple of fishermen, a tax collector, a guy who turned out to be a thief and a traitor, and some other guys like James the Less, Simon the Zealot, and Thaddeus (also called Jude) about whom we still know pretty much nothing at all.

Did you ever wonder why he picked the men that he did? Wouldn't it seem logical, when beginning something as critically important as the New Testament Christian Church, that Jesus would somehow scour the countryside for the first 30 years of his life to find only the very best and the very brightest? So why didn't he?

By way of an answer, we ask yet another question: *What makes you think he didn't?* Jesus didn't make mistakes, which means he picked exactly the right men. The problem was not with the men Jesus picked, it is with our understanding of how things work. Listen carefully to you the verses that immediately precede our text for this morning. These words, together with our text, teach us a basic, yet critical, truth: **1 Corinthians 1:18-25** *For 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. ¹⁹ For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a*

stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,* ²⁴ *but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.* ²⁵ *For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

These words, together with our text, teach us to think differently. They teach us not to proceed as the world proceeds, not to use their logic or their plan for success. We are to trust God's wisdom, but that requires humility, doesn't it. It requires that we let go of what *seems* wise to us and to replace it with God's wisdom. Here we are taught to look for the *foolishness* of God and the *weakness* of God – as the world sees such things – and to recognize therein the power of God.

Our text teaches us that God has always filled not only the church pews but also the pastoral robes with something other than what the world would consider "the best and the brightest." Why would he do that? For starters, the wise, the powerful, the influential want nothing whatsoever to do with him. They reject what God is offering in Jesus Christ as not just useless but demeaning, insulting, or just plain silly. That doesn't mean that Jesus doesn't want to save them; he just didn't pick them to lead his church. The reason is evident. The wise and powerful always find it necessary to impose their will, their stamp or influence, on everything with which they come in contact. In other words, they are never content to let God call the shots and to let God alone dictate truth and wisdom. Their lack of humility precludes trust.

Does that then mean that all Christians today are stupid, ignorant, and unsophisticated? To the world (by definition) yes. To God, no. We say "by definition" because the very fact that we believe absolutely all that the Bible teaches makes us all foolish and ignorant in the eyes of the godless. Always has and always will. In God's eyes however it is just the opposite, which means we need to learn to think (as much as is possible) as God does, and to see ourselves and our fellow human beings as God sees.

The big road-block here is that we are still drawn both to the Jewish demand and to the Greek error. We were just reminded that ***"Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom"***. That's the pattern to which you and I are also naturally drawn. The Jews in Bible times demanded signs – miracles – before they would "believe." Yet even when Jesus and his disciples gave them those signs, they demonstrated that they really weren't interested in what he was offering. The Greeks (the non-Jews) demanded that everything make sense – *to them*. They held up their own understanding as the standard that God had to meet.

Although it's hard to imagine anything more arrogant and prideful, we are burdened by exactly the same tendencies when we approach God's Word. Have you ever, for example, read something in God's Word that didn't make sense to you, or maybe conflicted with something you believed to be true, *and doubted or questioned the Word rather than yourself*? Whole segments of "Christianity" today do that all the time. They read of God's designated roles for men and women, and they doubt the Word rather than themselves. They read about miracles and doubt the Word rather than themselves – because everyone knows that's just not how things happen in the real world. They read about God's condemnation of various *popular* sins, and doubt the Word rather than themselves. This is just modern evidence that Greeks are still seeking wisdom, and that what they find in God's Word still represents foolishness to them. You and I are not immune.

Now, if we know such things to be true, then obviously God does too. He knew that you and I wouldn't naturally trust *him*, we would naturally trust *ourselves*. That's pride in action. He knew that if we were to have any chance at all, *he* would have to act. We wouldn't pick him, so he picked us. We could not and would not choose what he was offering, so he chose to act with neither our help nor our consent.

Think on that for a moment. Let it really sink in and fill your world. The fact that God *chose* you is evidence enough that you can and should trust him to also choose *for* you. Go back to the very beginning. The moment we sinned, God could have – and would have been perfectly justified – had he chosen to simply destroy mankind. Worse still, he would have been perfectly justified in allowing us to destroy ourselves. He didn't, did he? Instead he *chose* to sacrifice his greatest treasure – his own Son, Jesus Christ. He could have demanded something from us, something arduous and painful – something *we* would have to provide. He didn't. He chose to have his own Son provide all that was needed. He chose to have his Son come to earth to do what we could not and would not do. He chose to have his son provide the perfect obedience to his Word and will that we could not. This Jesus did, and then God chose to credit that life and death of his own Son as the satisfactory payment for all that we have done wrong – *and continue to do wrong*. This is the plan God chose to save us. And then, since we couldn't even come to trust God's plan on our own, or to go on believing once he brought us to faith, God chose to do both for us. By his Holy Spirit he brought us to faith, and by that same Spirit he preserves us moment by moment in that faith.

The God that would do that for us – the God that would make such choices – can now be trusted with every aspect of our lives. In making that best and most important choice for us, he can be trusted to make all of those lesser choices for us day by day, moment by moment. He can be trusted to choose our friends, our spouse (or lack thereof), our school, our career, the time of our retirement, how we spend our free-time and how we spend our money. All of it. We just need to be humble enough to trust him to do so. How exactly does he "chose for us"? He gives us perfect guidance in his Word, and the most concise summary was laid out in 1 Corinthians 10:31: **"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."** If God's children would approach every decision, every choice in life on that basis, the vast majority of our choices would be both simple and clear. Then too what also becomes clear is the critical role that humility plays in all of this. Nothing works if we refuse to abandon self – that arrogant, self-serving, self-important side of us. To trust, we need to first acknowledge that God knows infinitely better what is best for us. God's will for our lives is incalculably better than our own.

Once again everything points always and only to Christ. He is our wisdom. He is the thing that is absolutely *just right* in our lives. Christ came to save the *unworthy*. Humility starts with believing this basic truth. He died to pay for *sin* – my sin – though I had no right to ask or expect that of him. He gave his life to save those who are nothing in the eyes of the world. The wise and powerful of this world have a hard time coming to grips with such truths. Man naturally wants to believe that he is somehow worthy of what Christ did, and that the beautiful and gifted of this world are somehow even more worthy of what Jesus did. All such ideas are, from first to last, wrong. They are, in God's eyes, foolishness. Christ alone has made us what we are – God's children. The Apostle Paul in our text resolved to glory always and only in the Lord for a very simple reason: our God, our Savior, alone is worthy.

Note finally that although God chose the poor, weak, and foolish, our text says nothing of remaining poor, weak, and foolish after God has made us his own. But we need to learn to think as he thinks, to see as he sees, and to desire *his* will in our lives. This too requires great humility, for we need to strip off what is ours and to put on, to adopt, what is God's. We are to recognize that now we are his Ambassadors, his representatives, and he desires great things (as he defines "great") both for us and from us. Remember, everything that you could ever need to better serve and glorify your God is available by request from the same God who created and preserves all things, in heaven and on earth. The God who chose to send his Son to save the likes of us can certainly now be trusted to guide and provide for us, until he calls us home. Amen.

ESV **Micah 6:1-8** Hear what the LORD says: Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. ² Hear, you mountains, the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against his people, and he will contend with Israel. ³ "O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me! ⁴ For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. ⁵ O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD." ⁶ "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" ⁸ He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

ESV **Matthew 5:1-12** Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. ⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. ⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ ¶ "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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***Trust in the Lord with all your
heart and lean not on your own
understanding.***



ST PAUL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany– January 29, 2023

The Opening Prayer by the Pastor

The Opening Hymn – 380 (*Stanzas 1, 3-5*) (*Red Hymnal*)

"Thy Works, Not Mine, O Christ"

The Order of Service – Supplement page 12ff. (*Brown Hymnal*)

The Scripture Lessons: (*Printed on the back page of this bulletin*)

The First Lesson: (Micah 6:1-8) The Holy Spirit here addresses us through the Prophet Micah. His message is both clear and simple: To obey is better than to offer sacrifices. Though we can in no way earn our own forgiveness or salvation, yet it is the Lord's will that we obey his commands. This is how we naturally thank him for all that he has done for us – and continues to do for us every day of our lives.

Psalms 51 (*Supplement page 31*) (*Brown Hymnal*)

The Second Lesson: (Matthew 5:1-12) Our Gospel Lesson is part of Jesus' great Sermon on the Mount. Together with our sermon text, this reading emphasizes the fact that God often chooses to glorify that which the world rejects. God grant that we never look down upon nor despise that which the Lord values highly – every single human soul.

The Confession of Faith -

The Apostolic Creed – Supplement page 15. (*Brown Hymnal*)

The Pre-Sermon Hymn – 532 (*Red Hymnal*)

"Thy Way, Not Mine, O Lord"

The Sermon – Text: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 (*Printed on the back page of this bulletin*)

"Trust Requires Humility"

The Offertory – (Supplement page 16 insert)

The Baptism Hymn – 753 (*Brown Hymnal*)

"Let the Children Come to Me"

The Baptism of Jasper Carman

The Prayers followed by the Lord's Prayer

The Closing Hymn - 751 (*Brown Hymnal*)

"God's Own Child, I Gladly Say It"

Silent Prayer

Welcome! - We warmly welcome any visitors worshipping with us this morning and invite you to join us each Sunday at this time. We are glad you are here!
To our Visitors seeking Holy Communion – In obedience to God's Word, we practice "Close Communion." This practice stresses both our concern for others, not wanting anyone to receive the sacrament to their harm (1 Cor. 11:27-30) and the importance of unity in confession and faith (1 Cor. 10:16-17). For this reason we ask that anyone who has not established this unity through membership in a CLC congregation please meet with the pastor to discuss this Scriptural doctrine before communing. This is a practice that we follow out of love and concern for you, and out of obedience to God's Word, not in judgment of anyone's Christian faith.

Attendance – Sunday (33) Average (36)

This Week at St. Paul:

Today	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour
No Midweek Classes		
Wednesday Next Sunday	-9:00 a.m.	– Sunday School and Bible Class
	-10:00 a.m.	– Worship Service
	-11:00 a.m.	– Fellowship Hour

CLC News – Pastor Andrew Schaller has accepted the call to Luther Memorial of Fond du Lac. Pastor Wayne Eichstadt is considering the call to Messiah of Eau Claire. As directed by our CLC Constitution, Vice President Michael Wilke has now assumed the office of President following the resignation of former President Michael Eichstadt. President Wilke will appoint a new Vice President in the coming days.

Wandering Shepherd – Pastor Roehl is scheduled to be out of town visiting family from Monday through Saturday of this coming week. As a result, there are no midweek classes scheduled. Plans call for a return on Saturday evening.

In Our Prayers – Pastor Cory Drehle was admitted to a hospital in Sioux Falls this past week with as yet undetermined issues with his heart. Please keep him in your prayers.

Church Council Meeting Notes – All members of the Church Council were present for the meeting on January 22nd. Treasurer Mantz reported that offerings for December were \$1,760 below budgeted needs, resulting in a General Fund deficit of \$2,093 for 2022. Since we have no Reserve Fund, that deficit will be carried over into 2023. Wording for a proposed change in our By-Laws was approved and will be presented to the Voters. The proposed change would reduce the wait time for membership to one week. An announcement will be added to the weekly PowerPoint reminding all attendees to silence their cell phones. The next Council meeting is scheduled for February 26th.