

Read

1 Corinthians 1:18–25

Isaiah 33:17–22

Consider

In the lead-up to Easter this year, there were a number of times when I was struck by the idea that God’s people, living in Palestine under the brutal thumb of the Roman Empire, were likely hoping for a political leader who would bring them once again to freedom. Scholars tell us that messianic expectations were running high during the years of Jesus’ earthly life, and that those expectations centred around the idea that God would send a king to restore the glorious monarchy that had existed at the time of David and Solomon.

Looking back we now know, of course, that Jesus was not that sort of king, but rather his rule was modelled after the suffering servant of the latter part of Isaiah. It would appear from the story in the gospels that no one, including the disciples, was looking for that sort of Messiah, no matter how many times Jesus told them that was who he was. We can understand why Paul says to the Christians at Corinth, *the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing*.

In Isaiah 33 God’s people are promised that God is going to save them (verse 22). Verse 18 of that chapter is perhaps echoed in 1 Corinthians 1:20...*where is, where is, where is?* It is as if the apostle is asking the Christians of Corinth to compare the world’s wisdom with the plan and purposes of God. Or to use another image, it might be that Paul would have his readers put the world’s wisdom and God’s wisdom on either side of a balance, measuring the “weight” or staying power of each.

In this sermon series based on 1 Corinthians we are looking for insights to **building a church that can reach our world**. I think the temptation still exists, almost 2,000 years after Paul wrote to this church, for us to wonder if the message about the crucified Messiah is still *the power of God and the wisdom of God*. That’s what we’re going to explore this Sunday at SCBC. I hope you’ll be watching.

The Rev. Dr. Bill Norman

Pray

God of power and wisdom, I pray that you will help me understand that the power and wisdom of the cross is still the great and glorious message needed by our world. Give me a renewed devotion to our Saviour so that my life will be marked by his character—in service, in forgiveness, in generosity and in grace. I pray this in his name. Amen.

D i v i n g D e e p e r

Remember that when Paul is writing his letters, the whole Bible is what we now refer to as the Old Testament. The apostle is quoting the only scripture that he knows when he refers to Isaiah 29:14.

Why does he quote that verse?

How might this verse help the Corinthian believers to understand what Paul is saying to them?

How does Christ crucified demonstrate the power and wisdom of God?

Why was a crucified Messiah unacceptable to both Jew and Gentile?

How and why is a crucified Messiah unacceptable in our world?

An elevator pitch is a short description of an idea that explains the concept in a way such that any listener can understand it in a short period of time. Can you create an elevator pitch—remember it needs to be short—to explain why the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus is the turning point of human history?

How can we live closer **WITH** God in our lives?

How are we being **TRANSFORMED** to be more like Christ?

How is the Holy Spirit empowering us to imitate Christ in what we **DO** this week?