

Sermon for Sunday 3 March

Family Service, St Mary's Church North Marston

By David Heffer

Bible Reading

1 Corinthians 1: 18 –25

18 For 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. 19 For it is written:

*"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."*

20 Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Psalm 19: 1-8

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
2 Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
3 They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
4 Yet their voice[b] goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.
5 It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.
6 It rises at one end of the heavens
and makes its circuit to the other;
nothing is deprived of its warmth.
7 The law of the Lord is perfect,
refreshing the soul.*

*The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
8 The precepts of the Lord are right,
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.*

Talk

“Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world”

There was once a very young king long ago who was very rich, he had everything he wanted and lived in luxury. But he was not content. Everything he tried seemed to make him more discontented. Now he had around him many clever people with lots of good ideas.

When he was cold he called the plumber in and the plumber made hot water run through the pipes that made up his bed frame so he was really snug at night. When he was bored he call his jester in to organise entertainment with clowns and tumblers to make him laugh but he was not amused. His cook made the most fantastic, delicious food, but somehow the king knew something was missing. The Queen did not know how to make him happy although she loved him very much.

Now one day the King was walking in the garden when he peeped over the hedge and saw an old man struggling along the road with just rags on his back and obviously very poor. Now because the King had been brought up protected from the world and unaware of life outside the palace, he felt a tug at his heart strings and he suddenly realised what would make him happy. He called to the old man and invited him into the palace. He gave him some decent clothes and sat him down to a good meal. The king was very excited, “Of course” he said to himself “This is what makes people happy,” all these other things are foolishness and he nearly burst with joy and he was never sad again.

In our reading St Paul one of the New Testament writers, makes fun of people who think they are wise and know everything. People who make long speeches and write clever things. We live in a world of discovery, every day someone comes up with a wonderful breakthrough which makes people’s lives safer and easier and these are good; but we hear these days of people who despite all these wonderous

innovations are very sad, lonely and frightened. The world is full of supposedly wise people who have no idea how to solve people's deepest needs. St Paul points out to his readers that Jesus's death on the cross to some people is foolishness but to those who embrace it, it is life and health and peace. You will remember that Paul writes "God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom; and God's weakness is stronger than human strength."

How wise must some of the leaders of nations think themselves as they approve the destruction of innocent people. As children are terrorised and denied the basics of life and even life itself.

How wise must some freethinkers feel as they degrade and disparage others for their colour or misfortune in life. How clever must some individuals think themselves as they offer their own ideas as to how we should run our lives and yet their own lives are far from complete.

Consider Mary's insight when she says "He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted the humble and meek."

How careful we must be in the light of the wisdom of God. I am reminded of Thomas Binney's hymn written in the nineteenth century "Eternal light, eternal light, how pure the soul must be, when placed within thy searching sight, it shrinks not but with calm delight, can live and look on thee."

I once came across a proverb it said "If you Harbour bitterness, happiness will dock elsewhere."

What the Psalmist says rings so true: "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. They have neither speech nor language and their voices are not heard, YET their sound has gone out into all lands and their words to the ends of the world."

The wisdom of God speaking to us without words.

What a lot of foolishness there is in the world today. People trying to make themselves look younger, those wasting their time envying their neighbours. People wanting MORE of what they have already, Arguments over what will seem

insignificant trifles in years to come. Leaders failing to learn the mistakes of the past.
People demanding signs and/or knowledge for it's own sake.
Has God not made foolish the wisdom of the world?

I close with this quote:

I said a prayer for you today and know He must have heard
I felt the answer in my heart, although he spoke no word
I didn't ask for wealth or fame (I knew He wouldn't mind)
I asked Him to send treasures of a far more lasting kind
I asked that he'd be near you at the start of each new day
To grant you health and blessings and friends to share your way,
I asked for happiness for you in all things great and small;
But it was for His loving care, I prayed the most of all. Amen