

Today we hope to come full circle with our exploration of why we go to Church.

We started out this month asking the question: why are there so many different churches out there? Why does Christianity seem so divided? We saw that this was because sinful humans place their own desires above the pursuit of Christ. We saw that even in our expectations of a church we can be terribly misguided when we look for wisdom or power of this world rather than trusting in the power of God. Jesus Christ's death on the Cross is the wisdom and power of God revealed to us. We trust in him alone. In order for us to see and understand this, we saw that God must reveal himself to us. We must have a spiritual rebirth where we are filled with God's Spirit. God's Holy Spirit enables us to see the wisdom and power of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Today we ask the question: what do we do with all the variety we see?

To close this month of April – I want us to see three things using 1 Corinthians 3 as guide.

**First – we appreciate the diversity in God's kingdom building work.** People are different; and do their work differently.

Paul compares himself with Apollos, another preacher of his day. First he asks us to imagine a farming field. On a field there's the goal of one crop being produced, but there's a lot of different work that needs to be done. Ploughing, planting, watering... and finally harvesting. Paul wrote, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it." (1 Cor 3:6). A few verses later he uses the illustration of a building where there are again different types of workers, "I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it." (1 Cor. 3:10).

Think about it: How foolish would a person be to prefer one farm worker over the other; or one type of builder over the other? As much as you love planting season, you can't harvest a crop with only planters. As much as you love electricians, you can't build a home with only electricians. Paul teaches us that the focus shouldn't be on the workers but on the work. The important thing isn't which talents, gifts, or personality you prefer; what matters is that they are doing the work of God.

**This means:** When attending church, when listening to God's word being preached – your first questions should not be: Do I like this pastor? Does he seem smart? Is he eloquent? Is he likeable? No. Your first question is this: Is the Word of God and God's Work through Jesus Christ being preached and practiced? Such preaching teaches you to deny yourself and humbly follow Jesus Christ.

Dear friends – don't miss this point, because if you do: you are in danger of basing your faith and church life on your own preferences and desires rather than seeking God to work in you. Because what, after all, is the pastor? They are only servants. Servants appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ to do his work.

**Secondly – Appreciating diversity in workers teaches us to acknowledge God's one purpose.** Both times when Paul compares his work to another faithful preacher he notes that in God is the one at work. "Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow." (1 Cor 3:7). And... "No one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:11). Farmers all have to work together to produce one crop. Builders all have to work together to make one building. So also, the work of the Church is united in one purpose, united in one person Jesus Christ. Like many stones are laid together to build one temple; so God, in Jesus Christ, is uniting many people together into one community. As Paul writes, "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16).

**How is this possible?** Unity is created by God, because the same Spirit lives in each person. Instead of different ideas, pursuing different desires – we are of one mind; because the Spirit that lives within us gives us the mind of Christ.

**Finally** – recognizing these two points will help us appreciate that God’s work is in fact – brimming with resources far greater than we might think. Whereas – based on our own preferences we might minimize a certain type or person or personality or perhaps even ignore some; when we learn to look for God’s Word being proclaimed we see God’s has tremendous resources at his disposal. Why? Because God doesn’t have to depend on the abilities, talents, and gifts, of men – but instead uses men according to his good purpose.

Don’t think you are wiser than God. Don’t think you can find a better methodology than the plain yet powerful preaching of the Cross of Jesus Christ. Dear friends, as Paul writes, “Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a “fool” so that he may become truly wise.” For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight.” (1 Cor 3:18) – Don’t destroy the temple of God because of your preferences; rather pray and seek true unity that looks only to Jesus Christ.

“So – no more boasting about men!” (1 Cor 3:21a) God’s work is much greater than just one gifted preacher or one dynamic pastor. God has given you so much more than just one person or pastor. As Paul writes, “All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death or the present or the future – all are yours, and you are Christ, and Christ is of God.” (1 Cor 3:21b-23)

Here’s the wonder of God. When we set aside our desires; stop our selective boasting – we will begin to see that God works everything and everyone for the good of those who love him. We don’t need to throw all our eggs into one basket. We don’t need to become depressed when our favorite pastor moves to another church. Rather we can be excited, hopeful, waiting and wondering what God has in store for us next. How will he grow his kingdom next?

Dear friends – as we conclude this month of April – let’s remember when thinking about church, finding a church, or faithfully going to church - rather than trying to find what we want, listen for Christ being preached in all his glory and majesty. Led by the Spirit, which enables us to see clearly, we gaze beyond the person preaching, and look upon the power of the Cross of Jesus Christ. It is only through Jesus Christ and his work that we will be transformed according to true wisdom and with real power.