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Sermon

December 20th, the 4th Sunday in Advent

To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. AMEN. Our sermon text this morning is taken from 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, starting at verse 26.

²⁶ For example, consider your call, brothers. Not many of you were wise from a human point of view, not many were powerful, and not many were born with high status. ²⁷ But God chose the foolish things of the world to put to shame those who are wise. God chose the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are strong, ²⁸ and God chose the lowly things of the world and the despised things, and the things that are not, to do away with the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before God.

This is the Word of The LORD!!! The congregation may be seated...Mercy, Grace, and Peace ARE YOURS from your God and Father and your Savior from sin, Jesus Christ. Dear fellow Redeemed...

It is right around the corner. Finally, this is the week when Christmas comes! The Advent season that leads up to Christmas is one of anticipation and expectation. We simply cannot wait for it!

However, sometimes when we wait for something for so long and so eagerly, once it gets here it can fail to meet the hype. When I was a kid, I greatly looked forward to Christmas. A big part of that was that once the tree went up and the presents went under it, I could see all the wrapped up gifts but I didn't know what was inside them. This would allow my imagination to run wild. My siblings and I would get so wrapped up in the wrapped gifts, that my parents went so far as to change the names on the presents. They would intentionally label each gift wrong so our guesses as to what was inside each one would be off base. One year they went as far as putting different code names on the presents. While this meant that we couldn't guess what was what, it made the possibilities all the more endless. The raising of expectations undoubtedly raises the possibility of disappointment.

The Messiah was the long-awaited promised present of the LORD. His coming was foretold as early as the garden, and it was continued throughout the following centuries. By the time Jesus was born, the

people's expectation of what the Messiah would be and do had grown into wrong ideas. Many believed that the Messiah would overthrow the Roman government which ran the country. After Jesus fed the 5,000, He had to withdraw because the people were about to make Him their king by force, they wanted a bread king. These wrong ideas crept in, and when He finally did arrive, many ideas on who and what He was needed to be reset.

In our text this morning, Paul is reminding the Corinthian congregation to look at themselves objectively. These people were not wise, powerful, or influential. At least, not in the eyes of the world. But that is how the LORD works. God does not take the proud and inflate their ego. God takes the broken and fixes them. He fixes the broken, and they in turn fix others like themselves. God uses the weak and the witless to shame the strong and the smart. We see this time and time again, but we ultimately see it in God Himself. Jesus became a no one so that He might redeem everyone! And so, we pray - MAY THE WORDS OF MY MOUTH AND THE MEDITATIONS OF OUR HEARTS BE ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR SIGHT O LORD, OUR STRENGTH AND OUR REDEEMER, AMEN!!!-

Another gift wrapping tactic that would get employed at my house was the deception of big packages. I remember one year when my brother gave me a huge Christmas gift. The box he chose to use was a computer monitor box (Those were the days when these monitors were gigantic). What kind of a present would necessitate such a large container? Yet, when I opened it, it took me forever to unwrap it. It was like a Russain doll, box inside of box inside of box. Finally at the end, it was a small action figure that I wanted. While I appreciated the gift, I was a little mad about the effort he went through just to raise my expectations. I thought it would be huge, but really he could have just wrapped it in a shoe box.

Just because a gift looks big does not mean that it is. Similarly, just because a gift looks small does not mean its value is small. We get wrapped up in looks. But it's not about how the present looks wrapped up, rather how it looks when it is unwrapped.

Paul reminds the Corinthians about the same thing. Just because you look unimportant doesn't mean that what's inside is: **For example, consider your call, brothers. Not many of you were wise from a human point of view, not many were powerful, and not many were born with high status.**

The Greek culture at the time of this writing really prided itself on wisdom. It also prided itself on physical prowess. This was the culture that gave us the olympics after all... But just because you look smart or strong or are considered to be smart or strong in the eyes of the world, does not make you wise and or strong. What did Jesus say about this? **"So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen." (Mat 20:16 NKJ)**

God works with the weak and the witless. This is not to say that these people are actually weak or unintelligent, rather that is just how they were perceived by the world. How were the prophets of the Old Testament looked at by the people? Largely as strange people with strange words. Yet, their messages were that of the Creator of the World. Or look at the men that Jesus chose to be His Apostles. They were fishermen and tax collectors. These were not the best and brightest, at least not the way the

world considered them. But how they looked or sounded did not matter. What mattered was what was inside of them! Namely, the very same thing that is inside of us today as well: The Holy Spirit and the Gospel message.

The birth of the Savior of the world was not an awe-inspiring event. At least, not the way the world would see it. Most of us are born in hospitals around well trained medical staff. Perhaps the children of the rich and famous have more and better people around them. If there was a new member of the royal family about to be born, I could only imagine what kind of doctors would be around for that. Jesus? The only staff present for His delivery, besides Joseph, was live stock. He wasn't born in a palace or hospital, He was born in a barn. He wasn't wrapped in royal sheets, just some rags and swaddling clothes. His birth was lowly.

To whom was this "lowly" birth announced? It wasn't the theologians of the day, or the bureaucrats and magistrates, rather the heavenly host appeared to blue collared shepherds. They felt no shame bowing to a baby in a manger. Why? Because they knew that this baby was their Messiah. He came to seek and save that which was lost!

Have you ever experienced disappointment on Christmas? Maybe you knew that for sure you were going to get that certain gift which was all you wanted for Christmas... and then all the gifts are unwrapped and it's nowhere to be seen. This is probably more disappointing the younger you are. Once you mature and have seen many Christmas mornings, you understand certain things. You can't always get what you want, no matter how badly you want it. Perhaps your expectations were just a bit too high...

Or, have the tables ever been turned on you? This is depicted in the classic Christmas movie, "A Christmas Story". All Raphie wants for Christmas is a Red Ryder BB gun. The whole movie is basically about how badly he wants it. Christmas comes, all the presents are unwrapped, and? No Red Ryder BB gun. But then Raphies dad reveals that there's another present hidden in the closet. It turns out after all that the present you wanted all along was always there.

The same thing was true about the Kingdom of God!
27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to put to shame those who are wise. God chose the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are strong,

You would think that it would be good to be wise and strong. But these are outward traits that the world loves to declare. The Scribes were smart and learned people. But they couldn't see the Messiah who was in front of their face. The rich young man who came to Jesus had many possessions. But he went away sad once Jesus told him to give what he had to the poor and follow Him. The Pharisees held power and prestige over the people. But they were so dependent on their position, that they saw Jesus as only a threat instead of the Holy Lamb of God.

And the same is true today. How many people are there in the learned scientific community who believe the Bible-based account of creation? Not many... How many wealthy people believe that God has given them all that they have instead of thinking that they are the sole reason alone for their success? Not many. How many famous and recognizable names are out there who believe that there is only One Name (Jesus) that truly matters? Not many... It is to the shame of these people that they have so many advantages and yet reject the simple message of God's free gift of grace.

But of course, we are not excused from these conditions or pitfalls either. Just because we don't have what others have doesn't mean that we don't also have a pride problem. Just because we are relative nobodies like these Corinthians were, doesn't mean that we do not have the temptation of thinking highly of ourselves. Just because we don't have wealth or positions of power doesn't mean that the temptation to glory doesn't exist.

The fact of the matter is that God loves to use the lesser means to accomplish His will. He could send angels to preach the good news to us, but instead, He gives us an opportunity to share in His Holy Ministry.

The list of examples from the Bible on God using lesser means to accomplish His purpose is exhaustive. Think about when Goliath troubled the Israelite army. God could've struck him down where

he stood. Instead, He used a little shepherd boy named David to charge the giant with staff and sling. Or think of the Judge Gideon, who was from the weakest clan of his tribe. The LORD gave him a force, which He then determined was too large to show His glory. The LORD trimmed down his army from 32,000 to 300. This tiny army God used to defeat their Midianite foe, whose army numbered 120,000 before it was routed by 300 people. Or, as our epistle text says, consider Mary. She considered herself to be lowly. Yet she marveled at what God did! She sang, **He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty.**

Christmas is a time of pretty large expectations. The bigger the expectations, the bigger chance there is for a letdown. Have you ever had your Christmas ruined by someone else? You really enjoyed the gifts you got, until you heard someone else boasting about what they got for Christmas... Again, this might become less of a problem the later we get in life. But still, no matter how many Christmas' we have seen, there is always a possibility that we can have a bad attitude about Christmas.

God chose the lowly things of the world and the despised things, and the things that are not, to do away with the things that are, ²⁹ so that no one may boast before God.

It makes sense that God would use the lesser to accomplish His will. That way, the glory for what has been done can only go one place, the place it deserves to go, to God alone. If glory ever goes anywhere else but God and stops there alone, then it becomes idolatrous and harmful. The things and people that the world considers to be useless, are the things God usefully uses.

That is not to say that those who strive to serve the LORD are unintelligent, weak, or poor necessarily. Rather it is to say that the world views them as such. But also, if you do seek to serve the LORD, you need to come to a realization that you are all these things! Jesus told His disciples: **"If anyone desires to come**

after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (Mat 16:24-25 NKJ)

Are we wise? NO!!! This is not to say that we are uneducated. Rather, if we were truly wise, we would do what God has commanded of us instead of going against Him time and time again. Are we strong? NO! This is not to say that we are not capable of bench pressing. If we were strong we wouldn't need to be saved. But we are weak, and we have been saved by Jesus. Are we wealthy? It is possible that some of us are, but no one here is truly wealthy. Instead, whether we realize it or not, we are all quite poor. But that's ok because the LORD gives to us freely and regularly! When Martin Luther died, they found a piece of paper on him. It read in German, "We are beggars, this is true."

And yet, it is ok. It is ok that when the world sees us, it doesn't find much value in us. It is ok because when your Savior sees you, He sees great value indeed. The Shepherd leaves the 99 sheep to seek and save the lost one. Jesus said in **(Mat 13:44 NKJ) "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.** In that parable, Jesus is the one who does it all. He sells all that He has to buy us! He died so that we might live! He died because He personally loves you! The world can call us whatever it wants, doesn't matter. Jesus loves me!

And surely, the world will not love us. Our Lord prepared us for this! **"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. 19 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. 20 "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. (Joh 15:18-20 NKJ)**

We shouldn't expect to be anyone in the world. Why? Because we are not of the world any longer.

Instead, we are born of Spirit and of Truth through Christ.

That baby who was born truly was a no one. He was not born as a prince, although He did have a royal bloodline and lineage. When He grew up, there was nothing remarkable about His appearance. **He has no form or comeliness; And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him. (Isa 53:2 NKJ)** He did not look beautiful or strong. Yet He was! He was the strongest man ever because He defeated death and hell for the whole entire world. He is beautiful because of what He has done for us! We are proud to bear the name of this "no one", because that no one has died for everyone!

Yes, Christmas is finally here. It seems like it will never come until it finally does. That was what the birth of Jesus was also. He had been promised since the fall into sin, and He was long-awaited. But many who were waiting for the Messiah saw Jesus and went away sad. They couldn't get over His holy humbleness. They wanted a conquering King with armies and soldiers. What they got was a carpenter's Son with fishermen. This was a great disappointment to these people.

But to others, this was a great comfort. Why wouldn't God come like this? After all, if Jesus came for all, does it make sense that He takes the form of the lowest? The God who made the universe by speaking it into existence came in lowliness. If the almighty LORD became this low, shouldn't we worthless sinners consider ourselves so much the less?

We may not be wise or strong. But it does not matter. God uses all kinds of kinds. We may not be wise or strong, but it doesn't matter because once we have been given the gift of faith, Jesus is our wisdom and strength! We believe in our lowly Lord, and just like He was exalted, so too will we! All praise and thanks be to Jesus, for He saves us who are weak and foolish enough to not believe in ourselves and instead have been given His wisdom and strength to believe in Him! AMEN!!!