

May 10, 2020

Sunday Message

Acts 18:1-4, 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

IN this morning's readings we actually hear how busy Paul is in Corinth. We also get an insight into the development and early politics of the church in Corinth. This is a very diverse group that Paul is preaching to in this church. It is hard to keep them focused and unified.

In the reading from Acts it tells us again that Paul is debating with the Jews about Jesus the messiah. He has had some major success with these encounters. Crispus from the reading of the Corinthians was actually the leader of the synagogue there. The Jews were very strong in their arguments as to why Jesus was not the messiah. Paul being a Jew and a Christian was able to sway many Jews by his preaching to follow Jesus. To get into the points of this type of debate would be like a dog chasing its tail, maybe another time.

Let us go back to the church in Corinth. Paul is faced with a church that looks divided. He has his work cut out for himself. Upon further investigation it may only be fractured into cliques. Now Paul must find a way to bring greater closeness and unity between the four groups in the Corinthian church. These groups would be: 1) The followers of Paul and his teachings. He is the one who founded this church. 2) The followers of Apollos, he was a follower of John the Baptist and would go on to be the first bishop of Cyprus. 3) The followers of Peter (Cephas) the chief apostle. 4) Those who simply claimed to be "of Christ". Paul will try to unite this church with the sacrament of baptism and the cross of Christ.

In verse 13 of 1 Corinthians, Paul states that baptism in Jesus Christ is the sacrament of unity. Mind you at this time Paul's focus is not so much on baptism as it is on preaching the gospel. One first has to educate people by preaching before you baptise them. So that they understand you're preaching in order to

formulate their faith before they are baptised. Paul explains this well in verse 17. As an apostle, Paul's primary role is to preach the gospel. Teach those seeking God. Who later will be baptised. The one who performs a baptism is God's instrument. Those baptised must be loyal to God alone.

Then in verse 18, Paul uses the Cross of Christ as the message of unity for the church in Corinth. The transformative power of the cross unites all Christians who are saved by it. The saving power of the cross saves you because you are a Christian and not the fraction you belong to. St. John Chrysostom said, " It is a mark to them that perish not to recognize the things which lead to salvation." We who bear witness to Christ must not be discouraged when those outside of Him mock, for so did even Paul himself.

Things have not changed too much from Corinth to now. The Cross of Christ still unites Christians from diverse backgrounds. Just as baptism in the name of the Trinity marks us as followers of Christ and His message. I do not think the church is so much divided as it is diverse. There is great diversity in Christian unity. Sometimes we only need to sit down and talk to discover what unifies us. We have more in common because of Christ, the cross and baptism, than what diversifies us. This is a testament to the work of the Holy Spirit. Who has spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to different peoples over vast territories and areas? People express their faith in Jesus Christ by how it was revealed to them and how they understood it and internalized the word. All of this was accomplished by the Holy Spirit working through human vessels.

God Bless you all and may the Spirit continue to move in your lives and to all the mothers and grandmothers HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY.

Pastor D