

*18For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." 20Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. 22For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, 23but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. 26Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, 29so that no one might boast in the presence of God. 30He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."*

We proclaim Christ crucified.

St. Paul wrote these words.

The people to whom he wrote 1940 years ago did not like what he said.

People haven't changed. I don't like what he said; you don't like what he said.

Christ crucified, Christ weak, Christ suffering, Christ rejected, Christ forsaken. Why would Paul proclaim this Christ when he could proclaim instead Christ the one who calmed the sea, or Christ the one who raised a young girl from the dead, or Christ the one who fed five thousand, or Christ the one who conquered death.

None of us came here because we wanted to worship a victim -a corpse. We gather to get the power of God in our life. I want to take a step up, above the storms, above the disease, above the pain, above death. I don't want to live like a crucified one, but I want resurrection power now. I want to know that when I pray for me and for you that God will act, the wind and the sea will obey. I want to know that we can defeat poverty, and disease through the power of God. I want to know that the kind of craziness that's going on in Bosnia and Israel will not someday be on my block and in my neighborhood.

No more killing and dying and suffering.

Give us the new world now, Jesus resurrected.

But Paul says, "We proclaim Christ crucified."

Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews, and to Lutherans and foolishness to Gentiles and Republicans and Democrats and those who voted for Perot.

No one wants the crucified Christ to be proclaimed - no one except God.

For Christ crucified is the window through which we see God. Christ crucified is the mirror in which we learn to see ourselves, Christ crucified is the doorway through which we are led to our neighbor.

Our minds, our hearts, our hopes all whisper and shout that God will be known for sure in miracle - in good things - in our escaping all that we fear. God will be known through our children returning home safe each night, God will be known in our neighborhoods being kept safe, in our country at peace.

But in a moment of time God opened human eyes to a very different truth. Christ crucified.

The moment of Jesus dying, stripped, helpless, hopeless, hated by the world, this is the moment of God's power. God's love, God's saving you.

Some people may have trouble believing in Easter morning, or that a few fish and loaves fed thousands with twelve baskets of scraps left over. No one has trouble believing a man named Jesus suffered and died.

Cause that's where we live - in Bosnia, and in hospice programs and in burning homes. We gather at graves, and at the unemployment office, and at juvenile court. Beautiful stained glass dreams are shattered then, and we see Jesus on the cross. And we realize God is not defeated, will not be defeated, cannot be defeated. We believe. Not in our shattered dreams any more, nor in how we think life will have to be for us to survive, but in God.

We have nothing but God. Not pretty prayers, nor fancy doctrines, we have nothing but the sight of Jesus on the cross.

And the promise: Nothing in life or in death can separate you from my love.

God and God's promise and that's all. This weakness of God is stronger than all the armies that march, this foolishness of God is wiser than Einstein.

Christ crucified.

You and I don't know what will be for us. But we know who walks with us - the crucified one. He knows suffering. He knows ridicule, he knows shame. For your sake he was

crushed by all of these. So that you might know in the very bottom of your heart that God will not lose you.

You belong to Christ.

Today.

And tomorrow.

Forever.