

A Reading from 1 Corinthians 1:18. St. Paul writes, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God."

Remember the Old School Cheer: "Two bits, four bits, six bits a dollar. All for," name your team, "stand up and holler." I shared that cheer during a Christian Youth Breakfast and devotion in our community when serving in Ohio. The students there claimed they never heard it. Their blank stares told me as much. I thank God the adult sponsors knew the cheer. So they were drawn in to help create some enthusiasm. We taught them the cheer, enthusiasm included, after a short bit the students actually got into it.

Now you all are probably wondering, what is so spiritual about a cheer? Give me a moment and I will get to the point. We live in a culture that puts a high value on status, prestige, strength, power, and perhaps wealth. The Corinthian Church, whom Saint Paul is addressing had a problem with looking for power and prestige in all the wrong places. They were bickering over who was in charge. Some felt they should have the upper hand because of their standing in the community. It was like Paul telling them, "Now look people, this thing called church, or your faith life is not about who your prestigious parents were, or what position you hold in the community, or the number of degrees you have earned that gives you status in the church. It is also not about your traditions that you started at the founding of this church in Corinth. It is not about trying to put yourself ahead of everyone else." In other words they were fighting over everything that did not have to do with the gospel of Jesus.

What Paul is telling them about is a life of faith is that it all has to do with Jesus, that man from Nazareth, who died a foolish death on the cross, and went around the towns and villages teaching about this foolishness. And Paul tells the people that the weakness of the cross of Christ is actually power for those who are being saved. Notice that it says, "being saved." Which tells me we are all a work in progress. God chose the lowly and despised of this world to show us where to really look for His power. These words must have really shocked the pants off the people of Corinth who felt they had it made. I know the foolishness of the cross sounds like an insane plan to bring the world to salvation.

We are now in the middle of the playoffs in pro football. We are down to the four elite teams of the National Football League facing off against one another, The

best of the best, the strongest, the fastest athletes going against each other. Many of us love these titanic clashes with the world's elite.

Imagine now that God is the coach of a Super Bowl team, and for a minute, we think that God's team would dominate any team it goes against with 100-yard field goals, perfectly thrown spirals, and a defense that would allow total negative yardage on every play against the offense. Now imagine that we are asked to suit up against any of the four teams left. How would that turn out? We would get, dare I say, crucified. But look again, this is who God chose.

The Son of God, very God of Very God, born of the virgin Mary, in human flesh and bone. Who grew up and got baptized by John the Baptist. Who was tempted as we are tempted. Who in His ministry had nowhere to lay His head, was dependent on the hospitality of those He met along the way. God In Christ came just the way we are.

"God chose what is foolish...God chose what is weak...God chose what is lowly and despised." There we are getting suited up, you and me. You are right, we would get crucified. Which is the point of this first chapter. "Two bits, four bits, six bits a dollar, all for a crucifixion stand up and holler."

When I added the "crucifixion" to that cheer at that Christian Youth Breakfast Devotion, no one stood up, much less hollered. Which is the point. As we look for instances of power we tend to look at who has the most wealth and prestige. God has a different idea about that. He equates power with the weakness shown on the cross. It is in the weakness of Christ on the cross where God's power is shown. It is where Jesus wins salvation and the promise of the forgiveness of sins and defeats the devil.

Beatitudes -