

# Sermon Starter – God’s Foolishness

*1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Exodus 20:1-17*

**The problem:** Paul’s audience is a group of people who feel, and are, out of place with the society around them. They’re finding it difficult to follow in the footsteps of Jesus when they are surrounded by critique. In the case of the people of Israel, a clear set of rules isn’t any easier: the Ten Commandments can seem daunting while apparently reducing faith to a list of rules. Attempting to do it all on our own can leave us rigid and unwelcoming, making the instant gratification that we see around us even more attractive. Like the church in Corinth, we may find ourselves stuck between two poles: the obligations of religious practice and the enjoyment and ease of blending in with the culture around us.

**The grace:** Reducing God’s rules to a checklist of obligations that keep us from punishment misses the mark. Being a faithful Christian is not about morose rule-following. Neither is it complete isolation from the rest of society, though it may require us to appear foolish and silly to those around us. One’s perspective makes such a difference! From the point of view of a meritocracy, the cross is not attractive but grim; following Jesus by renouncing wealth, privilege, and violence (the most efficient means to an end) doesn’t make any sense. In an upside down and inside out point of view, however, the cross is a graphic and even strangely beautiful icon of Jesus’ open-armed approach to life. As Cynthia Bourgeault puts it, the path that Jesus walked both in life and in death was one of “giving himself fully, . . . losing himself, squandering himself, ‘gambling away every gift God bestows.’ It [is] not love stored up but love utterly poured out that open[s] the gates to the Kingdom of Heaven” (*The Wisdom Jesus*, Shambhala Press, 2008, p. 70). God is rich in providing enough for today, and powerful in ushering in peace rather than war, life rather than death. God’s foolishness is in fact greater than human wisdom.

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