



**PRODIGAL**

**CHURCH**

**SERIES: PRODIGAL CHURCH**

**DATE: SUNDAY, JULY 5, 2020**

**SPEAKER: TIM COLLINS**

**SCRIPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-24**

**Q1. If you were able to hear Sunday's sermon, what impacted or challenged you the most?**

**Q2. What is easier discussing with a stranger: religion, finance, or politics? Why?**

We are continuing in our series in the book of 1 Corinthians where Paul is calling the church of Corinth, which was struggling with divisive and dysfunctional issues, back into right relationship with God and each other.

In our context, New Zealand is a country of diverse ethnicities, religious beliefs and secular culture. We do life in our communities, neighbourhoods and workplaces in a melting pot of differing belief systems. Tim Collins posed this interesting question: How can people be true to themselves and not hide anything and yet still get along?

**Q3. Do you think this is possible in today's climate? What are the some of the hindrances?**

Tim said that there are three possible ways to answer that question. The first being is that we hide who we are. We do not tell people that we are Christ followers or we rarely talk about it.

**Q4. Can you describe situations where you tended to hide your Christian faith? Why was that? How was that for you?**

The second answer Tim mentioned is that we can speak out in such a way that is offensive.

**Q5. Describe scenarios where this has been true. (Hint: news, social media etc..) Do you have any personal experience of this? If so, what was the end result?**

The third way that Tim mentioned of how we can be true to ourselves and not hide who we are is to learn how to share who we are in such a way that creates peace and friendship.

## **READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-25.**

*<sup>18</sup> For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written:*

*"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."*

<sup>20</sup> Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Paul, in his day, said in verse 18 that the message of the cross is foolishness and a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles/Greeks. The Jews and the Greeks found it unacceptable that God could be made man and who would let himself be put to death on a cross without defending himself. The same is true for many in our culture today - the message of the cross doesn't make sense...it is foolishness. Paul has the same choices before him that we do. He can hide his faith. He can be offensive in the way he shares his faith or he can share it in such a way that invites peace and friendship.

What does that mean for us? How can we share our faith in the same way? By simple transparency. In verse 23 Paul says: "But we preach Christ crucified." That word preach is also the word proclaim. Paul in essence is saying that I share my faith by talking about it...not hiding it.

## READ ROMANS 1:16.

*I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes—the Jew first and also the Gentile.*

We show our faith and are transparent to others by the way we make decisions in our life, by the way we deal with adversity and problems, by the way we treat people unlike us or who believe differently to us.

C.S Lewis said: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

**Q. Do you know someone who models simple transparency in their walk with Jesus? How so? What does that look like?**

Paul was reminding the believers at Corinth that the message of the cross must be central to all of life and practice, but it is especially crucial in regards to how we view ourselves and others. We can't count on religiosity, rules, or human wisdom to help us love others when we disagree. Without the message of the cross, all of those things are useless.

**Q7. When did you make a personal decision to follow Christ? Or if you've loved Jesus since you were a very young child, when did you begin to understand the message of the cross?**

**Q8. How might your life be different if the message of the cross was foolish to you? What might you have done differently regarding certain decisions, attitudes, and relationships?**

## READ JOHN 14:5-6.

<sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

<sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you really know me, you will know[b] my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Paul is continually pointing to Jesus. The genius of God is that it is Jesus who makes us right with God. Not by our own efforts but by the grace of God. People in our sphere of influence and in our communities are looking to us as Jesus followers to see if our faith is genuine. To see if our walks match our talks.

We can share the message of the cross by not hiding it or without being obnoxious. Why? Because we are more sinful than we ever imagined and yet more loved than we ever dreamed. The message of the cross is the power of God.

**Q9. Have you ever written out "your story" and prepared to share it? A great exercise is to be able to shorten it to maybe two or three minutes so that you can quickly share with someone what Christ has done for you. Then practice it with others in your Life Group!**

"Learn to share your faith with real integrity. Ready. Steady. Go!" Tim Collins

End your time with praying for each other.

**Have a great week!**