



PRODIGAL

CHURCH

SERMON TITLE: THE END OF THE WORLD

DATE: SUNDAY, JULY 12TH, 2020

SPEAKER: CRAIG VERNALL

Most New Zealand immigrants don't arrive with much. The promise of a better life will cause people with little to seek a better future. New Zealand's story from early Maori migration through to the 21st century finds a repeated pattern of people seeking the hope of a better future.

1) Can you identify with this generalisation? Either you or your ancestors chose to leave somewhere with the hope of a preferred future.

The idea that we can start from humble beginnings and make something of value from our lives is of a high cultural value for New Zealanders.

2) Do you think this value still holds for 21st century New Zealand?

All of the above is simply a segue into our passage from 1 Corinthians 1: 26-31.

"Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

The author Paul is challenging the Corinthians with a cross cultural challenge. An argument that turns the value system of the world upside down.

3) Why would Paul celebrate the fact that those who normally win will miss out and those who normally lose will win? Does this grace seem unfair in some way?

4) How many Old Testament characters can you name who started off from humble beginnings?

So we can see how time and time again God chooses the least likely to prove his own strength. So that's why Paul's words can serve as a summary of God's activities as well as remain as a promise for us today. Nothing can stop any one of us from being God's child. But furthermore Paul tells us that by "being in Christ" we can "shame the wise" and "shame the strong".

5) In your understanding how does "being in Christ" cause us to "nullify the things that are"?

Perhaps if you heard the sermon you'll understand how this works. We nullify the wisdom of the wise and the strength of the strong by living a successful and satisfying life by "being in Christ". Wisdom, influence and being high born does not guarantee us peace, contentment or deep satisfaction. In fact the self made roads to seek these things are littered with far too many broken lives and lies.

6) Therefore an obvious but challenging question for us all will be; is being in Christ enough for you?

Boasting is the regular pastime of those who think they did it all themselves. Paul says that our wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption is all a gift from Jesus. Therefore our boasting should only be about Jesus and what he's done for us and through us.

7) How in our increasingly secular world do we give God the thanks and glory for what he has done for us and through us?

8) Finally do you believe that by becoming a Christ follower you're a wiser person than you would once have been. Or maybe you're a more influential person than you could have expected to become? What are your own reflections about the person you're becoming?

Let's pray that God will continue to be celebrated and glorified through the words, attitudes and actions of our everyday lives. He is our our wisdom, righteousness, holiness and redemption. Let us boast only in Jesus.