

Series: **“Being the Church in a World Gone Wild”**

CDOBC – beginning on 1/28/18

Today’s Title: **“Say What?”**

October 14, 2018 - 1 Corinthians 14:6-19

Objective: To help people be intelligible and intelligent with their Christian faith.

The balloon man creeps me out.

I realize this might not be fair...and it might be my own problem and emotional imbalance, but I’m not a big fan of the guy walking around a public place making balloon animals for you and then expecting to be tipped for his wonderful and creepy entertaining talent of balloon art.

I can remember being at Bedrox bowling alley with Kim - our daughter and one of her friends - having a good time - and then we saw balloon man...about 5 lanes away, dazzling the kids with the balloon dog and balloon giraffe he was magically creating before their eyes. All I knew was our daughter and her friend were not looking forward to balloon man arriving at our lane - and I wasn’t looking forward to telling him ‘no thanks’.

Church isn’t supposed to be creepy...weird, or confusing.

On the contrary, our worship service should be attractive to the spiritual seeker when they join the gathered community of Christians.

Nor is a worship service supposed to be a thoughtless or mindless experience. ***On the contrary*** - our faith embraces

reason and intellectual thought. Theological / Biblical truth is both simple enough for a child to understand, and it's intellectually deep enough for that same child to dedicate their entire life in trying to grasp the truths and realities of God and His plan of Redeeming all of creation.

You get the sense, when you read through 1 Corinthians, that the church in Corinth was a bit weird...maybe even creepy and uncomfortable for those looking in from the outside.

They were not only in conflict with one another, but they were chaotic and confusing when they gathered together for worship. They were speaking in tongues and nobody was interpreting what was being said, and everyone wanted to be the center of attention and to be admired for their spirituality.

Turn to 1 Corinthians 14:6-19

In our verses today, Paul continues to elevate the gift of "prophecy" over the gift of "speaking in tongues" because everyone in the room could understand what the person with the gift of prophecy was saying - while nobody understood what the person speaking in tongues was saying - not even the person speaking in tongues!! (vs. 2?)

So, Paul continues to help all of us understand that our worship gatherings must be *vertical* - glorifying and praising God - and they must be *edifying* - building-up other believers.

Now he adds 2 more principles. Our worship must be:

1) Intelligible

2) Intelligent

When we gather for worship, what we do and say should be *intelligible* - comprehensible...understandable for the guest among us who is unfamiliar with Christ and the Church.

What we do and say should be *intelligent* - meaning it should be reasonable - thoughtful - it should make sense - it should cause you to think and meditate on the realities of Christ - Love - Sacrifice - Redemption - Grace - Justice - Sovereignty - Sin - Eternity!

The Christian faith, and therefore our worship gatherings, are not planned to only appeal to your emotions...but we need to be challenging your mind!

We must be “transformed by the renewal of your mind...”, which tells us the Christian faith is grounded in truth...thought - not emotions or emotionalism. A thorough Christian faith will include your emotions - since your emotions are part of who you are - part of your personhood. Let's not ditch our emotions in favor of a purely intellectual, cognitive faith. That would only be a partial commitment on our part.

Read vs. 6-8

Your words should encourage, not confuse. vs. 6-12

This is a novel idea in our modern-day.

How often are words used to hurt - insult - to advance one's cause at the expense of another.

Words are deadly weapons in our culture - and they've often been used as deadly weapons in churches.

As a follower of Christ - I must use my words to encourage - to edify - to build-up the other person.

The Apostle Paul was trying to correct the abuses in the Corinthian Church. They weren't using words as deadly weapons - but they were using them as tools of self-promotion and selfishness. They were ignoring the call of love and acting in ways which advanced their own reputation as a 'spiritual' person.

Last Sunday we looked at vs. 1-5 and learned that Paul elevated prophecy above speaking in tongues - simply because prophecy is understandable to the entire church - and tongues are not.

In our verses this morning, Paul develops this truth further by demonstrating the unproductive and confusing nature of speaking in tongues in a public worship gathering.

Teaching should be understandable and make a point.

vs. 6-9

This seems like a no-brainer - a statement that is unnecessary. But I would challenge you to think about this statement the next time you listen to what an athlete says at a press conference - or what a

politician says when they begin to talk about something that might happen.

So many words without a lick of meaning!

Slogans - bumper sticker slogans!

When you push into the slogan...when you try and clarify what it means - what the implications are of what they say - there is nothing - there is no content.

Commercials - they don't try to convey truth - they try to illicit emotion - a feeling which will lead you to buy what they're selling.

Logic? Reason? It's often the antithesis to advertising or the rambling and pontificating of politicians!

But how many sermons have you listened to when it was all over you enjoyed the 30 minutes, but you couldn't summarize what the point was if your life depended on it! It was nothing but some entertaining stories and some proverbial statements which made you feel good - and the problem with the whole thing was the whole point was simply to make you feel good!

BTW - that's not what a sermon is supposed to be about!

He says in vs. 6: "...if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you..."?

In other words - *'if I come to you and speak in ways you can't understand...what good is it?'*

Sometimes a sermon - or someone teaching a class or a small group can have a great deal of truth - but it's communicated in ways which don't make sense to those who are listening!

Paul says, *shouldn't I* "...bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching?"

There should be *intelligible* content when someone speaks in church.

There should be something beneficial to the listener. He then gives some illustrations to prove his point: a flute - a harp - a bugle. 3 instruments - 2 which are for listening pleasure - and 1 for giving orders and instruction to soldiers. In these illustrations, the principle Paul is communicating is this:

Spiritual gifts must bring harmony to the Church.
Spiritual gifts must prepare the Church for spiritual battle.

Think back to **chapter 12** and the illustration of the human body and how every body part is needed - valued - and some of the hidden parts are the most crucial. The visible parts (arms) are important, but not crucial (liver). There is a harmony to the physical body - the various parts working together - 'in-tune'.

Spiritual gifts are designed to strengthen or exercise the body (The Church) so it will be ready - like a soldier is ready and responds when the bugle call is heard.

Confusion is not helpful! Sounds like another unnecessary statement, but this side of heaven, it's very much needed!

Read vs. 9-12

What we do and say must speak truth to a person's mind - it must engage their thoughts - it must be "intelligible" - otherwise, Paul says we are "speaking into the air" - which is another way of saying your words are wasted - nobody hears them - they have no value - they vanish with the wind because they're devoid of content - truth - reason!

This is why I give you an outline - to try and help you know the key truths / principles I'm going to talk about - and to help you remember - and to give you a place to take a few notes. I hope my sermons entertain you - not so you're entertained, but to keep you tuned-in - to keep you interested and engaged with the truth I'm trying to share.

vs. 10-12 - Remember, Paul is not saying tongues are evil - he's simply helping the Corinthians understand the distraction they are in a public worship setting. The reality is there are many languages in the world - all of

which have meaning (vs. 10). But speaking in a foreign language - one with meaning - to those who don't know the foreign language - is pointless (vs. 11)!

Have you ever been on a bus - in the airport - and the people next to you are speaking another language?

You can't be involved with their conversation - even if they invited you!

You can't eavesdrop.

It created divisions - and in the Church, we must do everything to create unity.

The Corinthians wanted more of God - they wanted to see the Holy Spirit working in their midst - that's a good thing when the motive is right!

Paul tells them in vs. 12: *'You want to see the power of the Spirit? Then “excel in building up the church.”*

Using your gift to build up others in the church - this is the Holy Spirit working through you - and before your very eyes!

Worship should engage your mind. vs. 13-19

What we do and say must make sense - it must consist of reason. This doesn't mean there's no mystery with the things of God or we can conclusively answer every one of our questions. Every truth about God contains a sense of mystery. With applied reason we can understand certain truths - but we can never apply our

reason and intellect and comprehend the fullness and depth of God or His works. **So, don't hear only part of what I'm saying.** We cannot understand all of God through our reason - nor can we fully capture the wonder, truth and glory of His providential plan of redemption from eternity past (Eph. 1) and the future glory of the restoration of all creation in eternity future!

Like God told Job (chapters 38-42)

1-5 “Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind and said: “Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?”

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?

Tell me, if you have understanding.

Who determined its measurements -- surely you know!

33 “Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you establish their rule on the earth?”

40:8 “Will you even put Me in the wrong? Will you condemn Me that you may be in the right?”

42:3 - Job's reply to God: “I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.”

However, don't let the greatness and ultimately incomprehensible nature of God cause you to set aside your mind. Your Christian faith is not rooted in emotionalism, fanaticism or fantasy - it's rooted in the truth - intelligible, intelligent truth!

Read vs. 13-19

The person speaking in tongues - Paul says they should pray for the gift of interpretation also.

“Paul seems to have no compunctions about the same person being gifted by the Spirit, first to speak in a tongue, and immediately to bring an interpretation of God’s response. When it happens in a gathering of local Christians, we can instinctively feel uneasy, as if some hoodwinking or artificiality is being foisted upon us. Paul’s position is a healthy corrective to such skepticism.”

(The Message of 1 Corinthians, by David Prior, p. 245)

The emphasis here is on interpretation of tongues whenever tongues was spoken - so that there is no confusion - but clarity about the message of God! Then, in vs. 14-16 Paul pushes further on this point: We must be intelligible - and use our intelligence - our “mind” (used 4x in these verses).

There are 2 directions I want to pursue on this.

1) We may not speak in tongues, but we use foreign language all the time.

2) We must be thinking Christians - not simply reactive to society or resting in our past.

Let’s begin with the foreign language we speak in church...or in our daily life - it’s called “Christianese”.

Wikipedia:

*“**Christianese**” (or **Christianeze**) refers to the contained terms and jargon used within many of the branches*

and denominations of Christianity as a functional system of religious terminology.”

Urban Dictionary:

“A communicable language within the Christian subculture with words and phrases created, and redefined...that applies only to the Christian sphere of influence.”

One author has other titles / names for this Christian-speak: “*King James jargon,*” “*lingo of Zion,*” “*ecclesial English*” and “*pious pontification.*”

It’s important for us to listen to ourselves - and to make sure we’re not speaking in Christian-code language - but we’re using normal words and terms which everyone can understand.

“Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?” (vs. 16)

We need to be clear...and thoughtful - intelligent with our speech so what we say will be understood by all.

2) We must be thinking Christians - not simply reactive to society or resting in our past.

According to the book UnChristian, one of the criticisms of Christians is we are not very deep thinkers. *In their research, the authors discovered outsiders see the Church (and the Christians in the Church) as out of tune and disconnected with the realities of the modern world, separate from real spiritual vitality, insulated from*

logic, intellect and deep thought, and we prefer to live in our own little world - a Christian-sterilized bubble.

(UnChristian, by David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, p. 120-121)

The research clearly reveals we have an image problem with the unbelieving world in regard to our mind / thinking process.

How do we change this?

By making sure you are a thinking Christian.

More will be said on this next week - but Paul is clear that your mind must be involved in your worship.

In your prayers (vs. 14-15a), and in your singing (vs. 15b) you need to have your mind engaged!

The only way to change the perception that we don't think - is to make sure you're a thinking Christian - not just a reactive Christian who lives in the past.

Paul (vs. 18-19) says he speaks in tongues. In fact, he speaks in tongues more than any of those in Corinth. But, he doesn't speak in tongues in a public worship setting because of the confusion it would bring, and it wouldn't be helpful to anyone there.

Vs. 19 is hyperbole - and it makes a strong point.

Each of my sermons is about 2500 words (+ / -) - so 10,000 words would be 4 sermons.

Paul would rather speak 5 words of thoughtful prophecy - 5 words of God's truth understood by all - instead of 4 sermons in a foreign tongue.

Apply it...

Be thoughtful and thinking Christians.

Thoughtful: considerate of others - building others up - not focused on / or demanding your way but instead, to edify - encourage others in the Church.

Thinking: Jesus prayed we would not be taken "out of the world" (John 17:15), because we have a mission - we're sent by Him into the world - to live out and share the Gospel. In that same verse, He prayed that the Father would "keep them safe from the evil one." which is the great challenge of the Christian life: Living in this world that is not our home in a way that reflects the love, grace and truth of Christ. Resisting sin and embracing holiness in a way which pleases God and attracts non-believers. Jesus doesn't want us to live in isolation - but to live in this world on mission.

This requires us to be thoughtful - thinking Christians. "always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..." 1 Peter 3:15b