1 Corinthians 1:23 but we preach Christ crucified.

 I have to tell you that not long ago I attended a funeral and I found that funeral sermon rather disturbing and empty. Let me share with you why. The pastor at that funeral used as his text Isaiah 25. The verses of that chapter that he used were verses that pointed to the promises and hope of our God and Lord and what our God has prepared for us. In that section “a banquet feast” was described because the Lord was going to destroy the shroud that covers all people, the shroud of death. In other words, it is a text on the wonders and joys of heaven because God will send his Savior who will bring eternal life to all who believe.

 So far that sounds pretty good doesn’t it? Yet that pastor only mentioned Jesus once. That pastor never mentioned heaven, the resurrection of Jesus or any kind of afterlife. That pastor eventually brought his message around to these words, “So and so is safe. He has no more worries or pain to deal with. We are all safe because God is love.”

I’m sorry, what does that mean? We are safe? Never heard that term used to describe our Christian faith. Why didn’t you tell us about the wonders of heaven? Why didn’t you tell us that heaven is our home because Jesus suffered and died for our sin and rose again from the dead to conquer sin, death and the devil? Why didn’t you give us the hope of eternal life and tell us that our loved one is still alive, but with Jesus! Why didn’t you tell us that because of the promises of Jesus we will one day see and be with our loved one again? Why didn’t you give us the Christian message, the hope and foundation of our Christian faith that says God has prepared his heaven for us and that because God sent His Son we will live and feast with God forever and ever? Dear pastor, who claimed to be a Christian pastor, why didn’t you preach Christ crucified!

 Yet that is the problem with so many pastors in the world today. They have the name pastor and they claim the title Christian but the message that you hear from them is not, NOT the message of God’s Word and of his Christ! So let’s you and I spend some time today and just talk about what the basics of our faith is really about. Our simple theme will be: **WE PREACH CHRIST!**

 Let’s you and I just dissect that little sentence one word at a time and come to grips with what is being spoken of. Take that verb: **“We preach.”** Do you know what it means to preach? Let me help you by telling you this. In our everyday world, there are lots of examples of this kind of behavior going on with the difference that we give different words to the activity. In a classroom setting the Professor engages in the lecture. The politician gives a “speech” or “an address.” Members of the wedding party might give a “toast.” Your mother or father may have given you a “piece of their mind” for many different reasons. All of these words or phrases are basically a way of describing what the word preach means but evidently we reserve the word “preach” for those who are of the clergy. Do you get the meaning? It is a word that means “to proclaim, to share a message.” The purpose behind the word preach is that we teach, we share knowledge and guidance, give direction and help. I think we use it usually for the ministry because it is assumed that most preaching is for spiritual and heavenly purposes.

 Well, it should be! But too many preachers simply engage in homilies, nice little talks that address morality or speak of how you are to live and act. I have been to many a church service from other church bodies where that is all you hear. You hear how you should live and behave. You hear how to be a good person or how we need to act and behave just like Jesus did in every way. You hear how to make this world a better place and improve the lives of people. But, Dear people, is that what we should be hearing? Because I have a simple question. If morality lectures and work righteousness gobble dee gook is what the church is supposed to be doing, then why hasn’t it worked? Why hasn’t the world been changed? Why hasn’t life improved and this world become a better place? I mean, come on, Christianity has been around for over 2,000 years and the world is still the same sinful, valley of the shadow of death it has always been. So…if you are simply engaged in this kind of preaching, then please note it has been a dismal and appalling failure. Why hasn’t what you have been teaching had an impact?

 Because our text and God’s Word tells us what we are to preach. We are not given the task to morality teach or lecture on good works and self-righteousness. We are not given that task because such preaching will fail! We are to **preach Christ!** That is a very specific thing and a very specific message that we dare not overlook.

 So do you think that all Jesus did was come to teach us how to live or do our best? Do you think the life of Jesus was nothing more than how a good guy can impact the world and now, if we follow Jesus, life can be fair and there will be no oppression because we are all liberated? Then you do not understand the term “Christ.” That is Jesus’ title! He is called “the Christ!” That name means something and declares something.

 The term “Christ” is in essence the Hebrew word “Messiah.” It means “the anointed one”. As you begin to study God’s Word you begin to grasp that the Anointed One is none other than the Son of God who will be the Ruler and Savior of the world. He is the Ruler of the world because God has placed all things in his hands. As the Ruler, the Christ has given us His Word and his message of hope and eternal life. But the Christ has also grasped that you and I cannot and never have been able to rescue ourselves. Now, please note that the Christ, the Son of God is just, righteous and holy. What he has said, he means. What he has done and does is unchangeable. The Christ is pure and perfect in every way and never, ever makes a mistake or bad judgement in anything. All of this and a lot more is what the Christ is all about.

 I say a lot more because in truth the Christ is God. Who can fathom the depths of God? Our text reminds us: **“For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.”** We cannot fully understand God! We cannot even begin to know what He knows or even grasp his eternal nature or unending power! And yet, we are clearly told that if we know the Christ, the Son of God, Jesus, then we know everything we need to know to be heirs of eternal life and salvation! But let’s just go back and focus on the fact that Jesus is our Ruler, our King.

As our King the Christ takes that responsibility seriously. Kings have two tasks. First, they are to rule over the people. Remember the Christ is holy, so that means he will rule in such a way that the end result is our good. Christ always works for our good, our eternal good. The other task of the King is to protect the people from their enemies. For most kings that means they will raise armies and go to battle against the enemy and you and I will make up the army!! We will do the fighting and our king will direct the battle. Our Christ is different as our King.

 Our Christ is different because he is also the Savior. He is the Savior because He went to battle for us. It was a spiritual battle against our greatest enemies: Sin, death and the devil. Christ, our Ruler, our King, the just, righteous and holy one, did not raise an army to defeat our enemies but our Christ, Jesus, came and took on the battle himself. It is a battle and war that He won!

Believe it or not, we have arrived at our next word: **“crucified.”** Here is where our Christ, our anointed one is so different. He underwent crucifixion. But it is the purpose and reason for that crucifixion that we need to focus on. Why? Because as our text said, **“Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.”** That power and wisdom are demonstrated in what this word “crucified” means for us in this context.

 Because now we need to speak of the cross of Christ. He was on the cross because God had decreed that his son would be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Jesus was on the cross as our Christ, our ruler, the one who was doing battle for us and winning the victory. Jesus Christ, God’s son, was on that cross suffering for our sins. That’s the meaning of the words: **My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?** Jesus suffering for our sins. Taking upon himself the wrath, anger and justice of the Father for all the sins of the world. Jesus dying for us, winning the victory! Jesus being the greatest King and fighting for his children as no other has ever done before.

 Yet the cross of crucifixion speaks of more. It also leads us to the words of Jesus that say, **“It is finished.”** Jesus, the Christ, telling us that the work of redemption is done, sins have been paid for and God’s anger appeased. Now, something called “reconciliation” is ours. In other words, because of Jesus and his work, because he has been Christ crucified, our status before God is changed. In Christ God sees those who believe as holy and pure, as the righteous and blameless. That’s what the forgiveness of sins brings. With that reconciliation we are granted the gift of eternal life and salvation with Jesus. We are granted the gift of heaven and a seat at the banquet feast of God. We are saved!

 Nor is that the end of the message of this word “crucified.” We preach Christ crucified because of the empty tomb. The way we would all know that all of this is true and that God has saved and given the gift of eternal life is because of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus truly came back to life. Jesus, though dead, was raised to life, ascended into heaven and now lives and rules eternally for us. My favorite passage in this regard is Ro. 1:4, **“And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”** That verse is the epitome of **“we preach Christ crucified!”**

 We know everything about Jesus is true because of his resurrection from the dead. We know his Word is true. We know his payment for our sins is true. We know He is God’s Son. We know eternal life and salvation is ours in Jesus. This list of things I can tell you about the Christ crucified is pretty long and extensive so I will sum up the meaning of this by telling you that our God and Lord came in love to die for us, to fight for us, to pay for our faults and wrongs, and to open the gates of heaven by the simple act of believing all of this is true. More awesome is that our God and Lord evens calls us to faith, keeps and strengthens us in that faith for our eternal life.

 So, when you go to church, you need to hear that message of Christ crucified. To hear how we are plagued with sin and all kinds of horrid troubles and problems but that God took steps to take care of those sins and troubles. God’s son come on our behalf. Jesus endured our hell and was raised for our life. God had Jesus, the Christ crucified, thus bringing us the gift of eternal life and salvation by grace through faith alone.

 Because as our text told us, Jesus is what it is all about. Not preaching about Christ. Not just using the name of Jesus in a sermon but the message that Jesus as our Savior from sin sticks out and is heard. Because Jesus is the power of God. You want to grasp that power, understand that power or even feel that power then you need to wonderful and true message of Jesus. He is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. And just so you grasp it clearly, we preach because you are to hear and believe this message. We preach at Church because that is where God wants you to cultivate your faith and that of others. We preach to make sure you know the wisdom of God in Jesus.

 And Jesus is the wisdom of God. You want to grasp the ways and will of God the Father? Then hear and know the message of Jesus the Christ, the son of God crucified for you! Hear about the blood shed on the cross and the empty tomb! Hear the resurrected Jesus proclaim to you, **“Peace be with you!”** That’s the peace that comes from knowing sin is forgiven and heaven is our eternal destination. The peace that surpasses all knowledge and understanding, that serves as our calm in the storm, our light in the dark and our joy of salvation.

 Beware! The world, as did that pastor I mentioned at the beginning, thinks this message of Jesus is foolish. The world wants signs and proofs, vast miracles and demonstrations of the reality of God. The world thinks that to speak of God is dumb, let alone a God who so loved us He sent his Son to save. The world wants you to deny the truth of sin, the fires of hell and the perfection of heaven. The world does not want you to hear the preaching of Christ crucified!

 Well, do your best world! Our hope will be in Jesus. Our confidence will be in His victory on our behalf. Yes, this world, until Jesus returns again, will be filled with sin and troubles galore, increasing as the time for Jesus gets near. But the message of Jesus will stand. God’s Christ has brought redemption. God’s Son has died and rose for us. May we, dear Lord, preach Christ crucified now and always. Amen.