1 Corinthians 1:25 We preach Christ crucified, because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

 It is all so confusing. You know what I mean. All the stuff we hear and are being told. Let me give you some examples of what I mean. Please note, I am only trying to illustrate for you the difficulties we face in today’s world with all the information that is thrust our way. In many cases, just like you, I don’t really know what to think.

 Take the whole issue of gas prices. Now, there are a whole bunch of different reasons that we are given for the high gas prices. We are told it is Putin and the war. We are told it is the supply and demand issue. We are told it is caused because the current administration is deadly opposed to fossil fuels as a means of anything. And honestly, if we had a replacement for fossil fuels right now, that would be great, but in truth we don’t. We are told to buy electric vehicles but you realize that in order to charge those vehicles we have to burn fossil fuels to supply the electricity. Now if you have a 240 watt charging station at home it will take you 8 hours to fully charge your car. If you are going to charge it on normal household wattage, please note it will take you 2-3 days to charge your car. In truth, with a totally electric car I could never make a trip to visit with my daughter. It would take, by my calculations, 3 days to get there, if we could find the charging stations needed. All in all, I just don’t know what to think or what is best because the more you look into all of this the more confusing and political it gets.

 We are seeing a rising cost to everything around us. We are told it is a supply chain problem. What bothers me is that we are never told exactly what the supply problem is. Ships are still sailing, trains are still running, trucks are still hauling and so forth. We are told it is then a “worker” problem. I might actually believe that. The largest group of workers right now is my generation and they are ready to step out and retire. Problem is, there just aren’t enough people to replace them. And what is true is that the pandemic pushed more of them into retirement faster than what might have happened by natural attrition. But honestly I just don’t know because population tables say the people and workers are there. They are just not going to work.

 And then there is the pandemic. Again, I just don’t know what to think. Don’t get me wrong, there is clearly a disease going on and it has shown itself deadly but how it has been handled and solid information or even accurate information has been very hard to find. What I know is that so many people have been scared and filled with who knows what information so that our very society has been altered and I believe it is altered for good. The judge is still out on whether the alteration is going to be good or not.

 Well, if you think that is confusing, then you should take a look at what is going on in the religious world. In just doing a simple internet search on the number of religions in the world here is what I learned. The world says there is an estimated 4,000 different religions in the world. 85% of people identify with the five most prominent religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Christianity is the largest at 31%. Islam is next at 23%. Hinduism is about 15%. Buddhist are about 7% and the remaining 8% of religious people are divided among the remaining 3,995 other religions of the world.

 That all seems rather daunting doesn’t it. And then, when you hear such numbers one of the first questions that pops into our heads is: Well, how do we know then that our religion is the true one? Noticed how I phrased that question. I phrased it in such a way as to imply clearly that there truly and really is only one true religion. Do you know what I base that on? On the simple fact that if God is God, then God only needs to reveal himself in one way. God does not need to present hundreds of ways to serve and worship Him but only one. He is God! He can say, “Here I am. Here is who I am. Here is how I say it is going to be!” You see, if God is such that he has to make sure that every group is happy with what He declares then that isn’t really god, is it? God doesn’t have to please people, people have to please God. From just a basic human view point that’s the way it is. So since I believe there is a God, then I believe that God is God and that’s that.

 So how do we know which faith is the true faith? We need to look at and measure them all. I am going to make it easier for you. In truth, there are not 4,000 religions but 2! That’s right, only 2! There is the religion of work righteousness and then there is the Christian faith! That’s it! Just two! All one needs to do is look at the religion. If the religion is proclaiming that here is what we must do and be in order to get the favor of god or the gods, then that is a work righteous religion. Do you need to wear a certain type of clothing or eat only certain foods? Do you need to behave this way or that way? Can your god/gods be manipulated by offerings, prayers, zealous following or the practice of being an ascetic? Now, pay attention to work righteous religions. Every work righteous religion that I have ever looked deeply into literally has women in a secondary, often abuse role in every aspect of life. Only two religions don’t do that: Christianity and Judaism.

 The other religion of the two is the religion that proclaims that God has done everything for you! In other words, God has taken every step to guarantee your souls’ salvation and redemption. The only religion that fits that is Christianity. Now be careful. There are quite a number of Christian denominations that have rejected this salvation by grace and are back to practicing work righteousness. You can find two types of work righteousness practiced in the Christian faith. The one, where in the name of God or Jesus you will live this way, do this, be that, accomplish this, in other words, clearly show God your devotion and love and you will be saved. The flip side to this is the very liberal Christians who now declare: “God is love. Eat, drink and be merry because God is love and is not going to punish anyone for anything ever!”

 So what is Christianity to be about? About Jesus. About preaching Christ crucified. About what God has done for us in Jesus in every way! It is that message that I want to spend our remaining time on. This wonder and marvel of what God has done for all of us in Jesus.

 Last Sunday we had the opportunity to speak of the call of Moses to be the deliverer of God’s people from Egypt. The significance of that is that Moses is the beginning of the written record of God in the history of the world. Moses is the first prophet and Jesus is the last prophet. From Moses on, everything that takes place is geared to lead to Jesus, to reveal Jesus, to have Jesus finally come and take care of our greatest problem: sin and eternal damnation.

 And that is what Jesus does. He comes into this world, born of a virgin, to take on the human condition of sin. He enters our world to engage in a spiritual battle that to this day I still don’t think we completely grasp. Jesus came to take on sin, death and the Devil and in that battle to win the victory of eternal life for everyone who believes.

 How did he take on sin? He was born of a human mother and into the human world of sin. Although Jesus does not have a sinful nature he must still confront and endure every sin to show himself holy and perfect before his Father. That’s what Jesus does. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that. **“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are, yet was without sin.”** We know this is true of Jesus because of the testimony of the Father. At his baptism the Father says of Jesus, **“This is my Son, who I love. I am well pleased with him.”** And again, at the Transfiguration the Father says of Jesus, **“This is my Son, who I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him.”** I can tell you right now, the Father does not say these things unless Jesus is perfect and holy and ready to be the sacrifice for all the sins of the world!

 And then the greatest act of love we have ever known takes place. The Passion of Jesus. From the day of Passover on, it is clear that Jesus knows what is coming. His human side is distressed by what is coming, and yet his holiness and perfection yields to the will of the Father for the sake of souls. I don’t think I need to recite the point by point agonies of Jesus, because soon enough we will hear all of that coming up on Good Friday. All we need to know at this point is that Jesus on that cross of Calvary, suffers the wrath and anger of God the Father for all the sins of all the world for all of time. Jesus endures complete and total hell for every soul. Seriously, I have said that for years and honestly I still don’t think I can fully grasp the awesomeness of what that means. If I just think of my sins alone and the eternal damnation and death they deserve my mind is in a whirl. And if I think of all of your sins and the eternal damnation and death they deserve my mind already cannot fathom what Jesus has done. But that is what He has done. He paid the eternal price for each and every one of our sins. And then Jesus died.

 Sometimes I forget that Jesus has already accomplished the greatest thing. Jesus has already paid the spiritual price of sin but Jesus has come to do a complete and thorough job. So Jesus now dies. Physically dies because physical death is literally the “mark” that God put upon mankind to testify to the reality of sin. That mark had to be taken care of too. So Jesus died. Physically breathed his last and for a brief moment endured that separation of body and soul so unique to us humans. That’s because Jesus not only needed to conquer eternal death as in eternal damnation but also need to win the victory over physical death for our hope and comfort. So Jesus died. Died just so he could live again.

 That’s what He did. Jesus truly and physically comes back to life and was viable and present with his disciples and many others for the next 40 days. Jesus lives. The premise is simple. Since Jesus lives, so will we. That’s was his promise! He said, **“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even if he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me will never perish.”** Again Jesus declares to us, **“Because I live, you also will live.”** Even Paul, the chief of sinners, once brought to faith in Jesus grasped and understood this declaratory action of life: He wrote, **“Who in the spirit of holiness was declared to be God’s powerful Son by his resurrection from the dead—Jesus Christ our Lord.”** Everything we need. Everything that was needed. Everything was done that we might have a Savior and his name is Jesus.

 That, Dear people, is the Christian faith. Seriously, I am not so much concerned in how you dress this religion up as I am with the fact that the church, your church must always and faithfully proclaim this message of Jesus. That Jesus suffered and died for sin. That Jesus rose from the dead to declare his Lordship over all. That Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior of our lives and grants us eternal life and salvation because He has won the victory. He clothes us with His righteousness. He grants us heaven because He paid for our hell. This is our faith. This is what it means to preach Christ crucified! Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior for all the sins of all the world. Jesus, my Savior!

 Like I said, I don’t care how you dress that. You want to rant and rave and roll in the aisles, fine, as long as the message and what is going on serves only the wonder of Jesus as the Savior. You want to dress in rich robes, throw water and incense about and do high chants and other ritualistic things, fine, but it must serve and proclaim only Jesus. You want to go out and be filled with good works and works of love galore, fine, but it must serve only Jesus. You want to meet in the simplest of buildings and quietly worship and pray, fine, it must serve only Jesus.

 Don’t let your raving and rolling be about you and your strong faith! Don’t let your fancy robes and rituals or your office and church body become so important that it replaces Jesus and his simple victory for souls. Don’t let your good works and deeds of love, maybe even your “demonstrated miracles” become so important that they replace Jesus. You know what I mean. When the message of your church is really “Look at what we do, look at what we accomplish, look how we have the power”…..and you can mention Jesus all you want…but when the focus is really you and your glory and your faith, just who do you think you are fooling? Everything must serve Jesus. Your worship, your praise, your life, your offerings, everything, is to be a reflection of Jesus and his wonderful eternal victory for you.

 It is this simple. You are the moon to the bright Sun light of Jesus! You are to glow with his wonder, shine forth his wisdom, and beam with his love. We are not to be lunar eclipses where the world block Jesus from us. You are to be Jesus’ flashlight. Not dull and weak because you let your batteries run low because you haven’t connected with Jesus for a charge in quite some time. Strong and bright in Jesus. And if you are a dead flashlight because you took Jesus out of your life, what does that say? Everything is to be about Jesus.

 That’s what it means to preach Christ crucified. To preach Jesus Christ as God and Lord, as Savior from sin and redeemer of souls. And yes, as you get into Jesus you can see his wisdom and might as never before and you will know that no matter what, Jesus is right. But it all starts, continues and ends with preaching Christ crucified. Christ our Redeemer. Christ risen in victory for our eternal life. Jesus, sender of the Holy Spirit that we might believe in this redemption and shine with Jesus. Just like the moon doesn’t shine because it has to or wants to. It just does because that’s how it was made. That’s the true faith. Amen.