

rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

"Wisdom among the mature" – spiritual wisdom from God is spiritually discerned by spiritually aware people, and "The person without the Spirit... considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them..." , v.14 below. Hence the salvation of sinners through Jesus' death on the Cross is "a mystery that has been hidden", which none of the temple hierarchy understood: when they were sentencing Christ to crucifixion they could not see that it was God's plan for His glory, and for ours.

9-10 However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" – the things God has prepared for those who love Him – these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

"What no eye has seen" – Paul quotes Isaiah 64:4 and 65:17 to show that regular seeing, hearing, and reckoning cannot grasp the good things God has in store for those who put their trust in Him; a trust that invites the Holy Spirit to reveal what we could not otherwise know.

11-13 For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we

REFLECTION Our third facet of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, and a worshipper in Spirit and reality, is the explanation Paul gives of how Holy Spirit revelation works for believers. He is explaining this for the converts in Corinth, brought up in a Greek culture that prized intellectual and philosophical understanding. We are also products of this kind of first world, 'western' mind set and we, too, have to let go of relying on what is rational, and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal a different picture. *When we offer the Spirit freedom, we find He has a whole repertoire of ways to show His power – which is always lifegiving and encouraging.*

QUESTION *If Paul came to speak at our church, where might the expectations clash?*

PRAYER Lord, as we pray about our world and its social breakdown and injustices, its aimlessness and selfishness, we are getting the message that You need an army of disciples out there to be beacons and agents of purification for You. A humanly impossible task, but You have given us Your Spirit and it is up to us how closely we walk with You. We can grow in knowing Your mind and Your leading. Humbly we offer ourselves as apprentices of Jesus, for His sake. Amen.

have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.

"Who knows" – only we know our own mind. Similarly, the mind of God is known only by God's Spirit. God has chosen to make Himself known through Jesus His Son, and through the Holy Spirit with the Word giving believers revelatory insight of the spiritual realities.

14-16 The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

"Judgments" – the Holy Spirit-influenced person can make spiritual discernments, but should not allow themselves to be judged in a human way.

"The mind of Christ" – by walking closely with the Lord, we are given insight by Word and Spirit of what He is saying and thinking.

The Living Word

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Bible readings for Sunday, February 9, 2020, with commentary notes

Bible study on the Revised Common Lectionary passages for **February 9**
Prepare by reading the Bible passages beforehand – read again to reflect on the pulpit teaching

Theme: What it means to be a worshipper of God and a disciple of Jesus

Isaiah 58:1-12 – Not lip-service but heart-felt worship and obedience

Matthew 5:13-20 – Disciples of Jesus are to be salt and light

1 Corinthians 2:1-16 – The wisdom of God is the reality of the Cross

Also read: Psalm 112

Isaiah 58:1-12 – Not lip-service but heart-felt worship and obedience

The people of Israel's hypocrisy cuts them off from God

1 "Shout it aloud, do not hold back. Raise your voice like a trumpet. Declare to My people their rebellion and to the descendants of Jacob their sins.

"Do not hold back" – Isaiah's warning about the danger from rebellion and hypocrisy was to be as clear as a trumpet blast, Exodus 19:19; 20:18; Hosea 8:1; 1 Cor. 14:8

2 "For day after day they seek Me out; they seem eager to know My ways, as if they were a nation that does what is right and has not forsaken the commands of its God. They ask Me for just decisions and seem eager for God to come near them.

"Seek me out... seem eager" – the hypocrisy fleshed out. The people seek God while in their actions rejecting Him.

3 'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and You have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and You have not noticed?' "Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers.

"Fasted... and You have not seen it" – God has not responded because the fast was their idea, and the rest-day Sabbath (His idea) is being defiled by their harsh, unfair treatment.

4-5 "Your fasting ends in quarrelling and strife, and in striking each other with

wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

"Only a day" – but not honouring God on the other six, and even on that day there is violence along with a show of religious observance – a mixed message.

6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?

"The kind of fasting" – if Israel was going to give something up, far better to give up exploitation and the "yoke" of social oppression. True devotion brings an awareness of injustice and need for change.

7 "Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

8 "Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.

"Light break forth" – salvation, bringing joy and prosperity in the Lord. This light would dawn with the coming of Christ.

"Righteousness... rear guard" – a picture of an advance secured by vanguard in front and rearguard behind. Israel's righteous relationships would clear the way for God's presence and prosperity. "The glory" recalls the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness, Exodus 13:21, 14:20 and Isaiah 4:5-6.

• **For further study**, read v. 10; Isaiah 9:2, 10:17, 59:9, 60:1-3; Luke 1:78, 79.

9-10 "Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and He will say: 'Here am I.'

"If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

REFLECTION The OT era was a time of laws, sacrifices and priests, while the post-resurrection time we live in has none of those things because of the grace, or enabling, of God by His Spirit, where we have His law in our hearts to live out as a set of values. However, the people of Isaiah's time went off track in the formal, religious system of their time. We also make the same mistake in our more relational way of worshipping God, who we can know personally through Jesus. It's hard work to keep up a relationship with God and the temptation is to create a repeatable form of devotion instead of seeking Him in Spirit and truth. *Maybe God is prompting us through this passage to pause, think about our relationship with Him and catch His heart afresh.*

QUESTION *How eager are we to really know God's ways? How do we lapse into paying Him lip-service?*

Matthew 5:13-20 – Disciples of Jesus are to be salt and light

Worshipping God is respecting His Word, as Jesus did

13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

"Salt of the earth" – first of two metaphors about disciples of Jesus being the presence of Jesus who guard against the world's corruption (like salt preserving food) as a distinct flavour. Salt that "has lost its saltiness" isn't salt, but a similar-looking

"The LORD will answer" – similar to Isaiah 30:19 where the context is Yahweh longing to show Himself gracious, as soon as the people turn to Him from their stand of independence. The turn here must be a change from false accusation and oppression to compassionate heart.

11-12 "The LORD will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail. Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings."

"Rebuild the... ruins" – broken-down Jerusalem in 6th C. BC was a symbol of human failure. Nehemiah would lead a rebuilding, and later Jesus would come, the Light in the darkness with Good News: salvation and streams of living water.

mineral deposit only good for making paths.

14-16 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

"You are the light of the world" – because Jesus is

the light of the world, while He is in the world, John 8:12 and 9:5, and Jesus' disciples have the Spirit of Jesus and kingdom life in them.

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

"Not come to abolish but to fulfill" – Jesus was accused of overturning the Law, but His antagonists couldn't understand His answer, that He came to fulfill it – all of it, right down to the tiniest single-stroke letter, the yod.

REFLECTION To be a worshipper of God and a disciple of Jesus is a call to be different and possibly unpopular, in a world of people who are happy to be self-determining and human-centred – but perishing. The kingdom of God can be perceived as a threat, before it is received as the Good News of living in what God has done for us. Jesus' followers are called to be followers of Jesus, the Person, those who reflect His light and His presence through submitted and joyful lives. Either our witness has the distinctive flavour of salt, or it is something else. Either the light of Jesus in us is seen for what it is, or it isn't light, it's just a disconnected bulb. *Salt is always salty and light is always visible, and the presence of Jesus in us, the energising of the Spirit of Jesus, produces both – as much as we let Him.*

QUESTION *How do I respond to that call and keep it up. Is that about me as an individual, or us a connected body?*

1 Corinthians 2:1-16 – The wisdom of God is the reality of the Cross

What is humanly difficult becomes clear when revealed spiritually

1-2 And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

"Eloquence" – or the "lofty words and impressive wisdom" NLT, the Corinthians expected of a visitor, someone to be judged as a speaker. But Paul ignored the 'proper form' and went all out with the blunt, uncomfortable message of the Cross and Christ's self-sacrifice for them.

3-5 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. My message and my

19 "Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practises and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."

"These commands" – all the commands in the OT, although many have been fulfilled in Christ and others will be applied differently. This teaches us to receive the word of God in its entirety, as Jesus did, while thinking of how He taught its meaning and intention.

preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

"Fear and trembling" – Paul faced his audience in Corinth as an inadequate, nervous orator, but the power of God that came when He spoke was unmistakable – and it couldn't have been him!

6-8 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the