

“Cross Logic” – Stephanie Sorge Wing, 3.20.10

Are we there yet? Anyone who has been on a road trip as a child or with children has either heard or uttered these words. Are we there yet? No, we're still in our neighborhood... When you've been anticipating something big, time just seems to crawl along until the time is at hand.

In our Gospel reading, we learn that the time is at hand. For more than three years, now, Jesus' disciples had been following him throughout Judea and Galilee. They had witnessed and performed miracles beyond belief. They saw thousands of people gather to hear Jesus, to learn from his teaching. They witnessed his power and influence, despite opposition from the religious and political rulers. They saw lives transformed, and they experienced transformation themselves, as they followed this enigmatic figure. Jesus talked about the coming kingdom. He talked about a new kind of justice, and freedom from all kinds of oppression. He called people to repent of their sins, and he promised forgiveness. And he kept going.

They all kept going, just following Jesus. I imagine that they must have asked from time to time, are we there yet? Or maybe they asked where they were going, or when they might get to their final destination. But Jesus didn't answer those questions. He just kept moving. He was, after all, a man on a mission.

Still, when Jesus entered into Jerusalem this last time, the disciples must have had a sense that they were almost there. Finally, Jesus received the welcome

he deserved - the welcome fit for a king. Cloaks and leaves were laid at his feet, and a spontaneous parade of welcome gathered around Jesus. People cried "Hosanna!" and even proclaimed Jesus "King of Israel!" For once, this controversial character receives the respect and praise he deserves, and the rag-tag group of followers that have been with him on the journey are like his entourage. Our reading from John picks up here.

Some Greeks want to see Jesus, so they go to his entourage. They find Philip and tell him, and Philip finds Andrew, and tells him. Then Philip and Andrew go to Jesus together, and deliver this request. Jesus' response is a little strange, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." That sounds good! That's what Philip and Andrew and the other disciples have been waiting to see. But then he continues speaking... "Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life."

Come again? It just doesn't make sense. Of course we will never know what the disciples were expecting when they started to follow Jesus, but we know that they never quite understood the magnitude of what they witnessed. Jesus had to keep explaining, clarifying, and correcting, and even then, the disciples never fully understood - not until after the crucifixion and resurrection.

That's cross logic. Cross logic is God's wisdom. It takes everything we think we know and turns it upside down. That is what Paul is talking about in his letter to the Corinthians. Cross logic confounds the powers that be. Cross logic doesn't make philosophical arguments or persuasions to belief. In fact, cross logic says, "You'd be crazy to believe this!" The suffering and death of Jesus on the cross is called a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. And for good reason!

The Jews had been worshiping God for their whole lives. They worshiped a God who was all-powerful, and they waited for a Messiah who would come to reign in glory, to establish the Kingdom of God. If Jesus was the Messiah, how could he be humbled, beaten, and put to death at the hands of people? If Jesus was the Messiah, how could he reign in glory when he was clearly lifted up in defeat? And for Gentiles, what on earth would make them believe in a religion that ends with a crucified savior? That's foolishness! But that's cross logic. Cross logic shows us that what appears to be foolish, and even what offends us in the death of Jesus, is actually God's wisdom.

Cross logic is the wisdom behind Jesus' statement, "Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life." The wisdom of our world tells us that we should love our lives. We should be happy with who we are, we should do what makes us feel good, and we should

achieve everything that we can achieve. But if our life is built around our success, possessions, and the things we think are of vital importance, then we have lost our life already. Do you remember the parable of the rich man who built extra storehouses to amass greater and greater wealth? God says, "You fool! This very night your life will be demanded of you." The original Greek is better translated as "This very night they require your life," that is, the possessions themselves own the life of the man who was foolish enough to think he was in control.

The wisdom of the world tells us that we can and should be in control over everything in our lives. Cross logic points out that it is those things in our life that actually have control over us. How much time and energy and money do we spend working for the things that we think we control? If we place our success, our possessions, and our achievements at the center of our lives, we are slaves to working more, achieving more, earning more, and getting further ahead. If that is the life we love, then we have already lost it. We have already given control to the things that we ourselves seek to control.

But if we hate our life in this world, then we will have it for eternal life. If our values are shaped by cross logic rather than human wisdom, then we will remember that the source of our life is the presence of God in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness, sanctification, and

redemption, all in the glory of the cross. God's righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are free gifts of grace through Jesus Christ. And that is cross logic.

What is at the center of our lives today? What are the things that we give the most value? If it is anything other than God in Jesus Christ, then we have lost our lives already; we have given our lives over to the things that we seek. But if we instead give our lives to God, if we offer up our worldly wisdom for God's true wisdom, then we will experience true life and freedom like we've never known before. Knowing how much we are loved by God changes us. It changes the world. But the love of God simply cannot be understood apart from cross logic.

Are we there yet?