

5. February 2023

The power of the gospel

1 Cor 2:1-5

Brothers, when I came to you, I did not come with any brilliance of oratory or wise argument to announce to you the mystery of God. I was resolved that the only knowledge I would have while I was with you was knowledge of Jesus, and of him as the crucified Christ. I came among you in weakness, in fear and great trembling and what I spoke and proclaimed was not meant to convince by philosophical argument, but to demonstrate the convincing power of the Spirit, so that your faith should depend not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

The gospel, the message of salvation through Jesus Christ, is and remains simple! Even if an infinite number of books have been written and there are learned reflections of all kinds about the Word of God, the core of the message remains simple! St. Paul, himself a scholar, knows this. How quickly can we be impressed by a great speech, marvel at the knowledge of other people, and perhaps even feel inferior to them!

But all this does not have the power with which Paul wants to proclaim the Word of God. He places the Crucified One in the center, that message of infinite love that Jesus showed to the Father and to us by giving his life for us and thus paying our debt.

This is the decisive thing; if we believe this and put it in the centre, then God's strength is manifested, because we have reached the essential point of the proclamation. And this message is understandable even for the simplest souls and does not require great intellectual knowledge, which could even become an obstacle.

Moreover, Paul came, as he says, in weakness, in fear and great trembling. So his own inner condition was not radiant, victory conscious and in some way above those to whom he proclaimed the cross! No, this weakness may even have contributed to the fact that the word and the message he brought were in the foreground, and not the bearer!

That is an essential point that we should bear in mind; both in our own proclamation, if we are called to such, and in our testimony. We must also keep this in mind when we find ourselves in front of other preachers: the proclamation of the Gospel must always return to the essence of faith, and from there everything else develops! If we believe, it is because God has awakened faith in us. Certainly, He can also use a preacher or another person who is full of Him, but it must always be clear that it is God who does the work. For only on Him can we build our lives; everything else vanishes!

On our way of following Christ, we will experience again and again that false securities which we create for ourselves or on which we have relied so far are lost. This is allowed by the Lord, to direct our gaze towards Him and to make us recognize that everything created is transitory. God wants us to really put our security in Him alone, for He alone is eternal. This is why Jesus said: *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away"* (Mt 24:35).

It is important that we really internalize this, because we cannot build our faith and our security on people who are there today, and tomorrow perhaps not anymore. They can be our signpost, light and help, but in the last depths we can only rely on God.

People can make mistakes, become fickle, may not resist temptations or not sufficiently reject them... To God, instead, none of this can happen!

From this background it becomes understandable why the apostle emphasizes all this! Moreover, he also had to see how the communities he led were easily impressed by the dynamics of different people who brought them another message and turned them away from Christ.

People tend to get carried away by fascination. This happens even in the Christian world. And when we get carried away by fascination, we become attached to the person and not to God; we are more impressed by the person than by the power of God.

St. Paul is aware of all this. That is why he, who more than anyone else was commissioned to proclaim the Gospel, stands behind the mystery of the Cross, so that people can truly encounter God.

This observation is important for all those who are in the service of the gospel!