

February 5, 2014 – EKKLESIA Message
“Living – Taught by the Spirit” – Pastor David Lee

I Corinthians 2:1-16

¹ *When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom.*

² *For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

³ *And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.*

⁴ *My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power*

⁵ *so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.*

⁶ *Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish.*

⁷ *But we speak God’s wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.*

⁸ *None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

⁹ *But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him’—*

¹⁰ *these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.*

¹¹ *For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God.*

¹² *Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.*

¹³ *And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual.*

¹⁴ *Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are discerned spiritually.*

¹⁵ *Those who are spiritual discern all things, and they are themselves subject to no one else’s scrutiny.*

¹⁶ *‘For who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.*

On Monday and Tuesday this week, Dr. Phil McGraw, of the “Dr. Phil” show, interviewed a young woman named Erin Caffey. She is serving two life sentences plus twenty-five years for the murder of her mother and two younger brothers. The show alternated between taped prison interviews with Erin, and live on-show conversation with her father, Terry Caffey. He was also targeted in the murders, and barely survived the attacks that claimed the rest of his family. Dr. Phil’s stated goal was to get Terry Caffey, the father, to admit that his daughter really did plan to kill her family. Dr. Phil wanted Terry Caffey to stop making excuses for his daughter, to stop minimizing her part in the plot to kill an entire family. The two day series ended with Terry unconvinced.

Erin Caffey, as interviews and the evidence convincingly portrayed, is a cold blooded killer. She initiated the plan to kill her family. She encouraged first one boyfriend (who dumped her precipitously), and then the next, who became the executioner of her mother, her two younger brothers, and the attempted murderer of her father. She knew what was happening the night of the tragedy, and she repeatedly called her boyfriend to encourage him. Why did she do it - she who attended church with her family every Sunday, who sang in the choir and cried with the emotions of the songs she sang? All the friends from church agreed that the Caffey's were a "perfect" family. What led this sixteen year old to do what she did?

Erin Caffey's behavior was governed by her desire to be free of the control of her parents, free of the rules of her family, free of the constraints of her church's expectations. Erin Caffey's behavior was governed by her desire to have a boyfriend, have sex, and even have a baby without being married. Erin Caffey's behavior was something she too easily learned from her peers (she said all her friends were having boyfriends, having sex, and some were even having babies). Erin Caffey's behavior was reinforced by most of what she heard and saw from the culture around her. Erin Caffey's behavior was governed by the **URGENT - IMMEDIATE - PERSONAL**.

Last weekend it was widely reported that Oscar winning actor Philip Seymour Hoffman was found dead in his New York City apartment of an apparent heroin overdose. In his apartment he was found with a syringe sticking out of his arm. Scattered around him were 49 packets of heroin, and several empty packets labeled "Theraflu." "Theraflu" is heroin laced with fentanyl, a sedative. This lethal combination is reported to have caused over 100 deaths in the last several weeks. Hoffman had been on a downward spiral for several weeks, having left his long time (15 years) girlfriend and mother of his three children. He had been reported to be using heroin again (he had been an addict since his twenties). Hoffman had recently premiered two new movies, was a star in the "Hunger Games" series, was celebrated for his stage roles, and was a devoted father to his son and two daughters. What led this celebrated and brilliantly accomplished man to devolve into a spiral of self-destructive behavior resulting in his tragic death? Philip Seymour Hoffman's behavior was governed by the **URGENT - IMMEDIATE - PERSONAL**.

The **URGENT - IMMEDIATE - PERSONAL** is the standard of our popular culture. Ironically, on the Dr. Phil show Tuesday, the tag-line at the end of the show was, "Medical support was provided by 'Doctors On Demand.'" "On Demand" is one of the most popular rebroadcasting services available for television. "Have it Your Way" is the popular marketing theme of the second most successful hamburger chain, "Burger King." The **URGENT - IMMEDIATE - PERSONAL** is the underlying demand of most of our technological accomplishments. The **URGENT - IMMEDIATE - PERSONAL** leads people to -

- talk and text while driving
- exceed speed limits habitually
- evidence road rage when anyone gets in their way
- car jack a pizza delivery man and leave him for dead in the snow

The **URGENT - IMMEDIATE - PERSONAL** is antithetical, the polar opposite, of "Living - Taught by the Spirit."

In the new book, All Joy - No Fun, author Jennifer Senior writes of how child rearing has dramatically changed in the last 50 years. She charts the origin of these dramatic changes to the 1920's, when children stopped being an economic asset to their families and began to be thought of as "economically worthless and emotionally priceless," (phrase originated with sociologist Alice Rossi in 1968). This transformation was concurrent with progressive political efforts to end child labor. Senior contends that children have since progressed from being "precious" to being "in charge" of their ever more harried parents' lives. In the process of this transformation, mothers have gone from being "housewives" to being "stay at home moms" to being "helicopter parents." Senior questions the positive benefit of the process, "I do question whether it's (helicoptering) good for kids just because it might set up this very unrealistic expectation like, if they snap their fingers, someone's going to be there to answer them." And as anyone who has interacted with children, toddlers to adolescents knows, on-demand electronic devices and services are about the only effective alternative to parents being on-demand. Once more the **URGENT - IMMEDIATE - PERSONAL** is the "order of the day."

According to Senior, an underdeveloped prefrontal cortex, the area of the human brain that controls impulse and emotional responses, is the expected reality of children, toddlers to adolescents. Brain studies have shown that the prefrontal cortex is not fully developed until the mid twenties. The development of the prefrontal cortex is something that must be carefully directed, historically, by parents and other teachers in children's lives. A person with an under developed prefrontal cortex is liable to be "irritable, quick-tempered, and impatient" as well as pursuing "behavior aimed at immediate gratification, despite knowing the longer-term results would be self-defeating." Now that sounds an awful lot like American human behavior displayed at all ages and in all places in our modern culture. What is missing? I think what is missing is "Living - Taught by the Spirit."

The first point that the Apostle Paul makes in the text for this day is that his personal weakness and fear are at the service of God. How can this be? We live in a day and time that celebrates strength and intelligence, often arrogantly. Paul elaborates this theme, that his weakness and fear are in service of God in several other passages -

- **II Corinthians 12** - ⁷ . . . *in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.* ⁸ *Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.* ⁹ *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* *Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.* ¹⁰ *That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*
- **II Corinthians 2** - ³ *I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling.* ⁴ *My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power,* ⁵ *so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.*
- **Ephesians 3** - ¹⁶ *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,*
- **Philippians 4** - ¹³ *I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

Not one Super Bowl commercial (seen this year by a record 111.5 million viewers) celebrated weakness and fear. One of the most dramatically impressive commercials (the one promoting a new Maserati model) showed children, weak and often fearful, demonstrating tremendous fortitude and ingenuity, and ultimately triumphing over all the competition. The Christian faith, on the other hand, triumphed over the greatest political powers of the centuries immediately after the life of Christ through the witness of powerless people. The Roman Empire did its creative best to terrorize believers into giving up their witness and it only produced even greater witness. Tertullian asserted, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."

But what is the benefit of this witness of weakness, and even fear? Is it worth it for us to turn from what the world around us offers to what God in Christ promises? What does "God have prepared for those who love him." The Prophet Isaiah promised,

- **Isaiah 64** - ⁴ *Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him.*
- **Isaiah 65** - ¹⁷ *"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.*

and the author of the Book of James declared,

- **James 1**- ¹² *Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.*

Paul the Apostle wrote in II Corinthians,

- **II Corinthians 5** - ¹ *For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

This is a witnessed first articulated by none other than legendary Job,

- **Job 19** - ²⁵ *"As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. ²⁶"Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God.*

And our Lord Jesus Christ promised, according to John the Evangelist,

- **John 14** - ² *My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*

And in Luke's Gospel, Jesus is recorded promising the thief on the cross beside him,

- **Luke 23** - ⁴³ *Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

So how can we be sure that we obtain these promises for our witness of Christ? How can we be sure that our weakness is what God wants of us? Paul teaches, in today's passage, ¹³ *And we speak of these things in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who are spiritual."* How can we receive the Spirit's instruction?

At the very first sermon recorded as preached by the Apostle Peter, in Acts Chapter 2, Peter is asked by someone in the crowd listening to him, "What must we do?" Peter answers, ³⁸ . . . *Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your*

sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”

About this promised teacher, the Holy Spirit, Jesus promised,

- **John 14** - ²⁵ *“All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you*
- **John 15** - ²⁶ *“When the Advocate comes, whom I will send to you from the Father--the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father--he will testify about me.*
- **John 16** - ⁸ *When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: ⁹ about sin, because people do not believe in me; ¹⁰ about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; ¹¹ and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.*

If we are to believe the words of Jesus, and I do believe the words of Jesus, then we who have given our hearts and our lives to our Lord Jesus Christ can count on

- a teacher to instruct us
- a teacher we can count on to be truthful
- a teacher who will convince us of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

In sum, a teacher who will help us grow beyond our culturally encouraged childish attitudes of serving the **URGENT - IMMEDIATE - PERSONAL**.

It is clear from Scripture that we are promised a teacher. But when? Do we have to wait for a time when, like Job, we will stand face-to-face with Christ? Do we have to wait for the moment when we stand, with the thief, in Paradise with Jesus? Paul, again, offers a more present reality, *“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.”* (Colossians 3:16) So the promise is that whenever we gather in Christ’s presence, whenever we become the Ekklesia, the Body of Christ, whenever we worship and study God’s Word, when we sing together and pray together and encourage each other, then we are living in the Spirit who teaches us and lifts us out of the immaturity, the childishness, of living by the standards of the world.

At the very end of the special two day Dr. Phil show on the teenager who plotted and carried out the cold blooded murder of her mother and little brothers, and the attempted murder of her father, a video clip was shown of the father, Terry Caffey, standing in the lot where his family’s home stood (burned by the murderers to try and cover their crime). In the video Caffey admits he felt overwhelmed by the loss of his family and the betrayal of his own daughter. He was prepared to take his own life at the place where he lost his family. He says, “I balled up my fist and I shook it at God. I said, ‘How could you take my family and leave me here all alone?’” At that moment, Terry Caffey was overwhelmed by the **URGENT - IMMEDIATE - PERSONAL**, he was overwhelmed by a sense of helplessness and hopelessness, what the ancients called “accidie.” Accidie is the last of seven deadly sins. It comes after all the other vain things of this world, after pride, greed, and lust. It comes after envy-covetness, anger, and gluttony. It is the final blow that the culture of **URGENT - IMMEDIATE - PERSONAL** deals to the likes of desperate teenagers like Erin Caffey, desperate young adult superstars like Cory Montith, and desperate

middle aged legends like Philip Seymour Hoffman - to anyone who has hope only in this life, this present world.

Terry Caffey continued his story, "Just then I saw out of the corner of my eye a paper fluttering in the wind. I picked it up. It was page from a book my wife had read, a book called Blind Side. I'd never read it." The page recorded the words of Michael Oher, a child abandoned by his mother in the projects of Memphis, Tennessee. The page read, "'I couldn't understand why you would take my family and leave me alone to struggle without them.' I took that as a message from God." Even in our darkest moments, when we are at the end of all we know how to do, and all that the world can teach us to do, God is reaching out to us through his Holy Spirit, teaching us. Jesus told Nicodemus, in John Chapter 3, ⁸ *The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.*" Just before this promise of the mysterious coming of the promised Spirit, Jesus said, ³ *Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.*"

The only antidote to the reign of the **URGENT - IMMEDIATE - PERSONAL** is the reign of God, in our hearts and lives, and through us in the world. Paul concludes today's text with this truth, ¹⁴ *Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are discerned spiritually.* ¹⁶ *... who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*" There is no better promise. There is no better hope.