

1 Corinthians 4:1-5 "Choose to be a Fool"

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[0 : 0 0] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah. It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?

The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me, actually, to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.

I invite you to just bow your heads in prayer for a moment, please. Father, we ask that you would pour out the Holy Spirit upon us, that as a church, you would reform us week by week by your Word written, that by your Holy Spirit, week by week, you will renew us, and that through, Father, the ministry of your Word, the renewing power of your Holy Spirit, as the gospel becomes more real to our collective hearts, that you, Father, would revive and renew us in mission, not only in this city, but to the ends of the earth. And so, Father, we ask that you would do that important work in our hearts, and we ask this in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. So I'm going to make some sort of negative, not negative, yeah, negative comments about how some churches are later on in the service, and also about us, by the way. But I'm going to begin with something about Anglicans, which is a bit weird, at least some Anglicans. So I grew up in Baptist churches, and I became a Christian through the Jesus People movement, which was very charismatic, charismatic. And for several years, I was part of charismatic-y types of house groups. And I went to the Salvation Army Church for two years. And then I stumbled into Anglicanism, and I really fell in love with Anglicanism, actually. In fact, the very, very first Sunday that I came to an Anglican service, I fell in love with the Anglican way. And after a year or so, I came to the conclusion that maybe God was calling me into the ordained ministry. And so you begin to go through a discernment process with all of that. First, you know, with the senior pastor of the church I attended. Of course, my wife was before all of that. She was the first discernment test. And, you know, go through some interviews. And finally, it comes to this second-to-last interview, where I have to appear before the bishop, the bishop's executive assistant, and the three examining chaplains. And I know some of you, most of you are younger than me, and so you can't imagine what this is like. But to my mind at the time, I was a 26-year-old guy, and they seemed impossibly old. They were probably 46 or something like that, you know, 48. Impossibly old and mature and competent. And I'm lined up outside the bishop's door. And there's this senior archdeacon examining chaplain. Then there's me.

Then there's the other people, men after me. And the bishop opens his door and says with a smile, come on in. And the fellow ahead of me immediately drops to two knees, takes the bishop's ring hand, and kisses the bishop's ring. Now, all these things are going on in my mind at the speed of light.

[4 : 1 2] I'm thinking, good grief. What did he just do? That's the first thing I'm thinking. Then the second thing I'm thinking is, is this the way Anglicans are supposed to greet their bishop? Like, I'd never greeted a bishop before. Is that what I'm supposed to do? And the third thing went through my mind was, there is no way in God's earth I'm going to get down on my knees and kiss the bishop's ring.

I said, it's not going to happen. And the fourth thing that went through my mind was wondering whether I'd just blown all of the discernment process before I'd even gotten in the room. So I just shook the bishop's hand. And then to my great relief, everybody afterwards just shook the bishop's hand. Now, it's a sort of a weird thing about some Anglicans. But the Bible text that we're going to look at today would tell us that what happened with that first man was quite wrong. wrong. Was quite wrong. Not because we're Canadians. Not because we should all be Baptists, which I don't think the whole world should be Baptists. Baptists should be Baptists. We all have to, not because of that, but because actually the Bible would say that the way we relate to our leaders shouldn't involve something like that. And so let's have a look. We're going to be looking today at 1 Corinthians chapter 4, yeah, 1 Corinthians chapter 4 verses 1 to 5. And it begins like this. And it's actually a really helpful thing. You know, some Christians get into big fights about what the Bible version is that you have to use. And that's fine. You know, basically actually, just so you know, if you're watching from the outside, most Christians use the exact same version of the Bible. It's called the dusty version of the Bible because they never actually open it and it gets dust. The best version of the Bible is one that you'll actually read, by the way. But they get into big fights about it. And there's a lot of people, a whole tribe of people who say the ESV is the best version, and that's the version we use. And this is an example of when the version's actually weak, the translation's actually weak. So it begins by this. Verse 1, chapter 4, this is how one should regard us. Now, I don't know why they did it. In the original language, and if you look at the NIV and the NLT and other translations, they translated something to the effect of, so this, so this is, or this then is. And that's the right translation. It begins with making a comment about what was just said. And because of what was just said, this is what follows. That's actually how it begins. So we're going to look at the bit just before because you can't actually understand this then if you don't know what just happened. A bit of a nerdish point, but it's important to notice things like this when you're reading the Bible for yourself. So let's just go up to chapter 3, verse 18. And I think Claire will be able to follow along with all of this. Chapter 3, verse 18. And it begins like this. So Paul is writing this. This originally was just a letter.

[7:09] There's other things I could say about the letter of 1 Corinthians, but Corinth is an important city in Greece. And the majority of the people in this congregation, in this church, because there would be many congregations, were pagans who had become Christians, although there's some Jewish people who'd become Christians, but it's mainly pagans. Deals with a whole pile of issues with people coming out of paganism and the rest of the letter. But here's how it begins right here.

Let no one deceive himself. And it's an imperative in the original language. Don't deceive yourself. Okay? Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly for God. For it is written, he catches the wise in their craftiness. So if you could put up the first point here, it's a bit of a surprising beginning to what's going to be talking about in chapter 4. But Paul is making, the Bible here is making a very countercultural point. And the point is that human beings, he's making several points with that command, but the first aspect of it is that human beings are highly prone to self-deception. So this would be, in other words, a human problem for all human beings is that human beings are prone to self-deception, highly prone to it. In fact, this would be a very good time when all of a sudden, you know, if we had a server, the server would run up, hold a mirror up to me so that I can have me looking back and I have to say to me, George, you are prone to self-deception. Sorry to point that way, but I'm pointing it myself. George, you are prone to self-deception. It's a human problem. And it's a deep human type of problem. And human, we basically, everybody acknowledges that self-deception can occasionally be an issue. And by the way, this statement here is profoundly un-Canadian. If you wanted to insult, it wouldn't matter if you were in a Tim Hortons, it wouldn't matter if you were in a Starbucks, it wouldn't matter if you were in a hipster coffee place that I have never heard about because I'm not hip. If you said to somebody in there, boy, you really deceive yourself, they would be deeply insulted. That's how you insult a Canadian to say that you deceive yourself. And yet the Bible is saying this to us. Well, what's going on with it? Well, first of all, I said it's not making an extreme statement that human beings only deceive themselves in everything all the time. That would obviously be self-refuting. It would mean you can't communicate, you can't know anything. And the Bible's not making a statement like that. The statement about us being prone to self-deception. And

by the way, don't you think, don't you think this is just empirically true? Like, don't you think that you know people who are a bit self-deceived? Don't you think sometimes maybe in a family, when you're thinking about the parents, or maybe in a marriage, you're thinking about your husband or your wife, that you sometimes think, well, boy, they're a bit self-deceived about that, you know? Like, don't you think that's true, that we generally look at other people and see within them self-deception?

[10:32] Like, on one hand, it requires some explanation, but if we're humble a bit, we know, we might, the hard part is to see that I'm prone to self-deception. It's an easy thing to see how others are prone to self-deception. And it's even easier if you look at tribes outside of your own. So if you tend to be more of a liberal supporter, you would look at the Polyev supporters as just being, not only are they being deceived by whoever, but they deceive themselves. And if you're a conservative, you look at liberals and think that, well, not only is Trudeau, you know, being deceived by others, he deceives himself. So it's easy for us to see it in other people, even though at first it's a bit of a jarring type of thing. But it's not making the extreme comment that people are self-deceived in every, completely, totally all the time. It's a little bit like the doctrine of sin, which once again is a very unpopular doctrine that the Bible teaches that every human being is fallen. And what that, people don't like that, but it's just so true. It means that sin or rebellion against God touches every single aspect of who a human being is.

No matter how deep you go, no matter how high you go, no matter how superficial or broad you go, that our desire to be like God, our desire to be put ourselves first, that that type of aspect is going to be present in some small degree all the way through who we are. So for instance, obviously people do good things. But the Christian doctrine would say, so even let's say something like I, you know, I give money to, I give money to somebody as an act of generosity. But, you know, if you were to look inside myself or you're looking inside, you know, that the person making that generous statement, they might be giving that generous gift because they want to get some recognition or they want to get praise or they want to have some type of power or they want to get something out of it. It's not really, in a sense, a sacrifice so much as a way to get something for yourself. A friend of mine was just visited a little while ago, a Buddhist temple. And so this is a human problem, right? Human problem. So I'm not picking on Buddhists. But he went to visit and there was a whole pile of sacrifices to the, in a sense, from a Christian point of view, the idol at the front of the temple. And there's a whole pile of food there, non-perishable and perishable food. And so after there was some conversation with the monks, my friend just said, well, like, what happens to the food? And the monk just said, oh, we'll eat it like we eat it. So it's not really a sacrifice. It's them giving themselves something, but looking more holy for giving themselves something. That's how sin and self-deception works. And so what the Bible is just saying is that there is an aspect of self-deception that constantly goes on in human beings. I'll give you another very personal example. One of the things now that I try to pray into myself all the time, because I see it as a problem with myself, is there's this wonderful line from,

I think it might be of the Father's love begotten, written in like the 400s. And it has this line, he the source, he the ending, he the source, the ending, he be, or something like that. And I've put it down in my notes to say, if I have anything good that comes out of that, the sermon, it comes from God. I'm not the source of wisdom in a sermon. And because I'm not the source, I might want to claim it as coming from me, but it doesn't come from me. It comes from God. I'm not saying that so you'll all think, oh, George, forget about it. This is a problem that George or anybody has with wisdom, that we think it comes from us. And because we think it comes from us, we think we should get some praise for it. But at the end of the day, it comes from God. Like, I need to acknowledge that because it comes from God. And therefore, God should get the praise. So that's actually what he's saying here, when it says, you know, in verse 18, let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. Human beings are highly prone to self-deception. Excuse me. But it also goes ahead and says something that if we had our, like, if I was to read this to some of my people that I've talked to in coffee shops who are outside of the Christian faith, they would sort of, if they were comfortable enough with me, they'd say,

George, is this insulting me? And that's always an awkward question. But what we'd have to say is, well, no, but it's describing something that's a problem for you and for me.

Because I'm a social creature, and so I am always going to be affected by my culture. Right? It is saying that, in fact, if you could put up the second point, Claire, that would be very helpful. Wisdom that emerges from a rejection of the triune God is really foolishness.

[15 : 54] Wisdom that emerges from a rejection of the triune God is really foolishness. Now, if the triune God doesn't exist, then, of course, we're the fools.

But if there really is a God that does exist, then to pretend or to talk or to live your life as if there is no God, then that is a type of foolishness.

Not a type. It's profoundly foolish. And once again, this sort of goes back right to the fact, one of the most important stories in the big story of the Bible. The big story of the Bible begins with Genesis 1 and 2 about the triune God creating all things out of nothing.

And he creates human beings in his image, both male and female, equally in his image. And then we have the story of the garden, and it's helping us to understand that this whole universe was ultimately designed for us, the image bearers of God, to live in.

And in a sense, almost to be like priests for the whole created order, ordering the created order for the glory of God. God wanted us to flourish. He wanted us to fill the earth.

[17 : 03] He wanted us to use our human abilities. And then Genesis 3 is the second chapter in the whole big story of the Bible that we human beings decide that we should be, we can be like God.

Now, once again, that's a profoundly foolish thing to believe. It's self-deception. Like, you know, you think about it for yourself. Like, you know, how could Eve stand there, or Adam stand there and think, yeah, I think I could make planets.

What? Like, even Elon Musk. I mean, maybe he does think he's godlike, but he can't make a planet. Like, you know, he's, you know, you could count how much his body's worth in terms of the chemicals and everything in it, and when he dies, it all starts to dissolve. Like, if the triune God really does exist, then to have wisdom based on the rejection of the triune God is always going to be profoundly foolish.

And this comes out in all sorts of ways. So a little while ago, I was talking to this fellow who was a businessman, and he'd been successful as a businessman in terms of, like, Canadian Ottawa types of standards, not Elon Musk standards, but Ottawa standards.

[18 : 26] And, you know, he'd seen me for quite a few years in the coffee shop, and finally we got talking. He thought because I read big books like this that I was a lawyer. He was surprised to find out that I was a minister.

And he's very friendly, a really good guy. He's the type of guy you'd want to have as your neighbor. And we got talking, he'll often ask me what I'm going to talk about on Sunday.

And one time I was just talking about how, you know, you need to have a meaning in life that has to be connected to something eternal, not just, you know, not just something that's transient.

And I gave him an example about how, like, you know, when death comes, you lose everything.

And he said, yeah, no, I can see how that's, like, a really good idea for people. And I said to him, no, no, I'm talking about you. Like, when you die, you lose everything.

And he went like this. Like, like it never thought, he never thought about it. That when he dies, he loses everything. And so if you lose everything in death, how do you have meaning in life?

[19 : 30] And he just never thought about it. And you see, if you understand that there is no God and it's just about this life, if wisdom emerges from a world where it's just one dang thing after another and then you die, and part of wisdom is to pretend that and then you die isn't there.

It's just one dang thing after another as if you will live doing one dang thing after another for the rest of your life. Then when it comes to wisdom, let's say, about money, the wisdom about money is to try to accumulate as much as you can.

But if you understand that you are going to die and there is a God, it might be that money is for something else, that maybe it's all about you becoming a different type of person and that the type of person that you become, generosity and care for others and their needs is actually going to be a really important part of how you get formed to be.

So it doesn't mean that you don't make money, you don't try to care for your family. In fact, it might be that God gives you abilities to make lots of money and if he gives you that ability and you can do it legally, go ahead and make lots of money.

Because it's not just about the money, that's not what God cares about, but it's not only is the money going to be your idol, which will turn you into a certain type of person, but are you fighting

that idolatry by being financially generous to your family, to your neighborhood, to the poor, to the mission of the gospel?

[20 : 50] But you see, if it's in fact that you have to give an account to God, then how money or sex or anything like that or power works is going to be very different because there's an accountability there and a design feature there.

And that's not part of how Canadians in general think about wisdom. In fact, if you could put up the third point, that would be very helpful. You cannot choose biblical wisdom without also choosing to look foolish.

That's what the Bible text is saying. You cannot choose biblical wisdom without also choosing to look foolish to your Canadian neighbors. I'm not boasting.

I'm really not. And by the way, you wouldn't have to give very much money, but I think if most people found out how much money I give away, Louise and I give away every year, they'd say, we're really stupid.

But they wouldn't use the word foolish. They'd use the word stupid. That's dumb, you know, to do that. You know, one of the pressures for young people around sexuality is that, you know, young women often feel pressure to sexually know a young guy outside of marriage, and it's because the wisdom of the world tells them they need to do that.

[22 : 03] I had this conversation with a Christian guy once who really felt that he had to do that so he'd be prepared for marriage. And I said to him, sleeping with lots of people outside of marriage only forms you to sleep with lots of people.

It doesn't help you at all to be married to one person. And he looked at me like he'd never even encountered an idea like that. That's not me being wise. That's just trying to hear what the Bible has to say, right?

But the Bible's wisdom is going to make you look foolish if you want to be wise in a biblical perspective. And a whole range of things. Power, money, sex, how you age, how you do your parenting.

You're going to look foolish if you choose to try to follow with biblical wisdom. So that's what's going on. And we're going to see why it is.

So why is it that the Bible is talking about this? And why is it going to go? Well, before we get to our text, which will be short, far shorter than this, the Bible takes a move from that idea about the need for biblical wisdom and that the wisdom of the world is going to form you in particular ways.

[23 : 16] And part of how the wisdom of the world will form you is always going to involve a degree of self-deception because it will involve a rejection of the idea that the triune God exists. And that, you know, in fact, actually, you know what?

The wisdom of Canada is that we judge God. That's the wisdom of Canada. Not that God might judge us.

So Paul goes on. How are we formed? Well, he wants us to be formed by wisdom. Let's continue. Chapter 3, verse 20. And he's going to move this into a bit of a surprising area.

But once again, an area that we deeply need to hear. Verse 20. And again, the Lord knows the thoughts of the wise that they are futile. Verse 21. So let no one boast in men.

Men in here means men and women. In people. In humans. For all things are yours. What? That's like a weird thing to say. For all things are yours. Especially if you think about it that this was originally written to a congregation and probably 40% of the congregation were slaves.

[24 : 25] And a huge percentage of the congregation would have been women. Neither of whom would have had any type of power and maybe not even property rights. And people would have gone, what?

All things are yours? If this is biblical wisdom it's sort of foolish. Well what Paul is doing is he's reversing the order of what he wants to say to get your attention.

So if you were to go back and read it backwards you'd see the point. But if he began with the point we'd go, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. That, that, we all know that. It wouldn't strike you. So he reverses the order to catch your attention.

So just note how it goes. Verse 21. So let no one boast in human beings for all things are yours whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas that's another name for Peter or the world or life or death or the present or the future all are yours and you are Christ and Christ is God's.

So basically what it's telling us if you're to reverse the order is that if we understand that God is God and we are not that no human being is God-like or anything like that but God is God and we are not and when we put our faith and trust in Christ that we're reconciled to the God of the whole universe that we belong to God then the way to understand everything in the world is like that old song that we sing occasionally this is my father's world.

[25 : 48] This is my father's world. The part of the lesson for us as Christians in prayer is to pray about anything because we have a father in heaven who loves us. If you're having trouble with the teacher your kid's teacher at school pray into it.

You have a father in heaven who loves you. Having problems with your neighbors? Having problems with your car? Having problems with your money? You have a father in heaven who loves you. This is our father's world.

Pray to him. Live in the world as if not as if it's ruled by Elon Musk or Trump or Trudeau or the Davos Institute or who's that bad guy they always pick you know that.

Anyway. Yeah yeah as soon as I say that people know the answer right? What does that say? I wonder if George he actually would probably be pretty happy that he's actually known even in Ottawa. You say that really bad guy and then people say George Soros right?

But the point is it's our father's world. That's what he's trying to communicate. And then chapter 4 verse 1 now we go this then this then okay?

[26 : 54] If you want to be biblically wise you need to be able to be willing to look like a fool in the eyes of Corinth in the eyes of Canada you have to understand this is your father's world that's how you have to live your life this is your father's world this then chapter 4 verse 1 is how you should regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

And this verse is going to be the main thing that we stay with for the next 10 minutes or so. And you might say George why would you why would this be something important to say to focus on? This is how one should regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

Well because the word translated as servant is really cool and I understand why the translators translated as servant and not what it literally says but what it says literally is this this is how one should regard us now here he's talking about us meaning him Peter him Paul him Peter he's talking about all of the leaders in the church and he's including himself with them and when it says the word servant the literal word is under rower now of course people don't get what that means that's why they translated as servant but that's literally what it says you need to understand me you need to understand Peter you need to understand George you need to understand George you need to understand yourself and by the way the leadership here is a on one level it's a type a bit of a hierarchical thing but it's only hierarchical in terms of the impact of your leadership because in a sense every single person here is a leader it might be that the main area that you have leadership with is with the shut in that you visit or if you're a single mom with your child or you know if you're an aunt or an uncle and God hasn't blessed you with children it might just be that one nephew or niece that you have a good relationship with and that might be the extent of how you influence other people because leadership is about influence and so for every single one of us whether you're the head of a denomination whether you're a world famous theologian whether you're the head of a megachurch or whether you are an aunt who has a niece that she can influence you are an under rower and if you've watched the

Ben-Hur I think it is the you know with Charlton Heston or the more modern one it's those slave galleys those Roman ships that are powered by people rowing and it's the people at the very very bottom of the ship rowing together isn't that a flattering image for Christian leadership but it's a very profound image for Christian leadership if Christian leaders like all other human beings are prone to self deception it's a spectacularly necessary image I was joking with the eight o'clock congregation maybe we should change our name to the congregation of under rowers or something like that except we'd be proud that we're the only ones who did it which destroys the whole purpose of the name but you know if you think about the under rower the under rower has to be working with it I guess not even as if he said you're like the tenth person on the Canadian national single kayaking team no no no no no no you're not that you're the under rower you're working with other rowers somebody else is banging the drums somebody else is making sure you get your rest breaks and you get water and you get food and somebody else is telling you when you turn left and when you turn right and when you go fast and when you go slow and where you're even going and where you even are you don't know that you're just the under rower boom boom boom and that is what all

Christian leadership is centered around to understand if you could if you could put up the fourth point Claire that would be very helpful Christian leaders are under rowers and stewards of the mysteries of God and that's a very important aspect here so because you see we've just been reminded I've just reminded you that this is our father's world the whole world is his the whole universe is his and I'm to start to try to learn to live as a person and it's very hard for me to do that because I take my eyes off of it that's one of the reasons

[31 : 26] I need like you to come to church and be reminded of these fundamental truths about what the real world is like and in the real world if you are in Christ this is your father's world you have a father in heaven who loves you that you can open up your heart to about very very big issues like maybe you know the onset of dementia or the coming of cancer or very very small issues like how do I get the ice off of my gutter like everything in between you can pray about everything and then it might see well okay even if we're under rowers now we're stewards but then it goes and says stewards of the mysteries of God and that's to protect us from thinking let's just be honest I'm not going to ask for a show of hands how many people would like for 24 hours to be given control of Donald Trump's mind or Trudeau's mind or the Supreme Court Justice's mind or our boss's mind or our husband's mind or our wife's mind we would love it okay keep going until I get a list right maybe for some of you I don't care about all of that stuff just give me the Toronto Raptors or the Maple Leafs or something like that because I know how to fix it well maybe you do maybe you do but it says instead stewards of the mysteries of God it really limits the lane that we're in well what are the mysteries of God well there's first of all the whole idea of the mysteries of God isn't like when we say there's a certain

I remember back in the day that a fellow this is in the 80s 100 million years ago to many of you I remember a guy with great confidence saying because Reagan had been talking about something like this and this guy hated Reagan and he said they will never in a million billion years be able to figure out something that can knock a missile or rocket out of the sky it will never happen he's completely delusional blah blah blah the biggest fool in the world and of course as we see Israel does it just commonplace as do ships and all sorts of people because because they they just can it wasn't a mystery in the sense that we can't figure it out a mystery in the Bible is something we cannot possibly know as human beings and we can only be told by God and so if you just turn with me very quickly in your Bibles you don't have to guess what the mysteries of God are because it's something which is talked about earlier on in the text look at chapter 1 verses 17 and 18 chapter 1 verses 17 and 18 for Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel and not with words of eloquent wisdom lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power for the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God it's a message about the cross we're going to see that as it continues look at verse 20 to 25 where is the one who is wise where is the scribe where is the debater of this age has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world for since in the wisdom of God the world did not know God through wisdom it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe for the Jewish people demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom pagans seek wisdom but we preach

Christ crucified a stumbling block to Jewish people and folly to the pagans but to those who are called by God both Jews and pagans Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God for the foolishness of God is wiser than human beings and the weakness of God is stronger than human beings and then just jump down to chapter 2 verse 1 all the other stuff I'm not this all fits with this theme and first chapter 2 verse 1 and when I came to you brothers and sisters I did not come proclaiming to you the test sorry I did not come proclaiming to you the wisdom of God testimony there means sorry the mystery of God that's where the word mystery is it's there in the original language you can see in the little footnote I did not come to you proclaiming to you the mystery of God with lofty speech or wisdom what did he do what is the mystery of God verse 2 for I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified that's the mystery of God that how God is going to make human beings right with him goes against everything that wisdom human wisdom rejecting the triune

God would expect that God the son of God would set aside his divine splendor and honor and privilege that he would take into himself our human nature that God the son of God in the person of Christ as Christ would actually humble himself to being a zygote in the womb of Mary that he would go through normal gestation that he would be born in an obscure corner of the empire that he would have a normal human life that he would have three years where he does spectacular miracles and

profound teaching but at the end of that all it does is create great enmity sufficient enmity that human beings would give him the death of a slave by crucifying him upon the cross that when we actually see him dying it's the whole point of him coming and the whole point of him coming is that he would take upon himself the sin the rebellion the evil the shame all that separates human beings from God and that he in a sense dies in our place in my place that apart from Christ apart from Christ

I am damned and doomed and dead and done but all that is placed on him and he's vindicated when he rises from the dead and so now I am not damned but given new life I am born again I am not doomed I am destined for his destiny which was be with my father forever I am not dead I have been born again I have been given new life I am not done the future is mine past present future death all those things my destiny is to be with my father in heaven and the new heaven and the new earth that is who I am in Christ and it comes by me not clinging to what I have done or could do or have to do or certain types of accomplishments or super holiness or anything like that it's all done by God for me in the person of Christ and all I can do is come with completely and utterly empty hands and say

[38 : 01] Jesus precious saviour Emmanuel God with us I am not worthy to be yours but I know what you did for me would you take me and no human being no matter how far from God will be turned away from Jesus if we come to him with humble faith and that's what makes us right with God Elon Musk I have no idea where but if he's apart from Christ he is no closer to Christ than the worst fentanyl zombie on the street he's no closer and no farther and that is the mystery of God Christian leaders are under rowers and we are stewards of the mysteries of God let's just actually finish it our time is moving on see how he's going to work this out and see here's why he's talking about all that if you want to be wise biblically wise you have to be willing to look like a fool that this is our father's world there's this profound equality that comes and then this image of us being under rowers and stewards of this particular message that's our stewardship and then it talks about the fact that we can get confused as Christians about how to evaluate ourselves look at verse 2 moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy so in other words the image is it's only actually the owner it's only the guy who's banging the drum and giving the directions even for that to send the boat in certain directions he's the only one who knows he's the one who gets to determine whether we're doing a good job that's biblical wisdom that is going to determine whether we're doing a good job it's not the wisdom of the world but you see and then verse 3 it says but with me it's a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court in fact

I do not even judge myself he's not saying this like he's a narcissist for I am not aware of anything verse 4 against myself but I am not thereby acquitted it is the Lord who judges me he's not being a narcissist he's not saying he's immune to criticism what's he saying well here's this verse 5 therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time before the Lord comes will bring to light things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart then each one will receive his commendation from God and so what the text is saying is this it's very easy for churches to start to lose track of what it is that they're stewards and so it can end up being that the church is the center of activism or the church is the center of this or it's the center of that or it's the center of opposition it's easy for leaders to think and I'll just speak as a minister that my job is to be therapist in chief my job is to be coach in chief my job is to be the philosopher in chief my job is to be the empowerment guru in chief

I'm to be the liturgist in chief I am to be a CEO I am to be the strategic leader for difference I am to be that type of a leader that wants to have my ring kissed and have people bow at my feet that I am to be the holiest one in the church chief I am to be the change agent chief I am to be the look at how wise we are in terms of the world chief I could go on and on and on and on and on and on and on at the end of the day those are the ways that churches keep getting confused and mixed up that they're all about therapy they're all about moralism they're all about you know making sure that they're republican or democrat or they love trump or they hate trump or they love Trudeau we get confused about all of these things and the bible is telling the church to understand you're under rowers and you only have one thing to do tell people about Jesus

Christ crucified you can do other things obviously do other types of things you know care for children you know have money to give to the poor but you have one primary job there's nobody else in the city other than Christians to tell people the triune God exists you're separated from him there is hope there is hope there is a savior there's nobody else to do that other than us you see that's

why we need this so here's the final thing about the wisdom of the world and how it forms us and why we need this if you could put up the final point a couple of weeks ago I've gone over my 40 minutes I apologize but anyway here's you know I said to you that the thing about advent which is really weird is that when we look at these old advent readings and these old advent collects they don't look like they're advent ones and that's because somewhere in the last 60, 70, 80 years and I'm not saying this is a bad thing by the way but advent became a way to prepare for Christmas but you know what we have in these readings it preserves the wisdom that goes back to the 300s maybe even earlier it's in a sense we're celebrating advent the way they did in 424 or 1549 and they understood advent as being the beginning of the year so there are four sermons four scripture texts about recommitting your life to Christ and committing yourself to try to live a more godly life in this coming year so how does the average consumeristic

Canadian Christian think about this never in terms of the local church all about me that's us being formed by Canada folks the wisdom of Canada these ancient Christians said no no no no you've got to figure out how to put on the you know put off the sin and put on the armor of god no no you've got to need the bible there's going to be some other things about personal holiness next week and they're also saying oh no no but by the way by the way just so you know you need a good local church if you want to grow in rejecting self-deception and be formed by the true wisdom from Jesus Christ crucified your saviour and your lord you know the average Canadian would say that they need biblical wisdom like a fish needs a bike and a lot of Canadian Christians would say they need the local church like a fish needs a bike but the bible says you need a local church like human beings need oxygen and if you're not connected to a good local church it's going to be very very hard to grow in godliness or commit yourself commit yourself once again afresh to

[45 : 15] Christ that's why this text was chosen so brothers and sisters let's stand pray that we all know that we're under rowers we have one primary thing to steward on God's behalf for this fallen world and let's pray father we thank you for your word we thank you father it is like a cold water splashed upon us to help wake us up it is like cold water coming to cool us down when we're getting all hot and bothered about all sorts of other stuff it's like a warm fire to warm us up when we're becoming frozen and can hardly type of move it's food for our soul it's wisdom father from you it is what we desperately need father we ask that you help us to be aware that we are prone to self-deception father you know how easy it is for us to see self-deception in others and not to see it in ourselves and we ask that you help us to father as Jesus

Christ crucified becomes more real to us that from that perspective and what he has done for us that we can begin to deal with how we like to deceive ourselves and father you know how uncomfortable we are with looking foolish to our neighbors and we ask father that Jesus Christ crucified would become so real to us that we're willing to look foolish to others and seek biblical wisdom and you know father how easy it is for us and we all have some leadership role in some way whether small or big and for us as a church to get really confused about things and we ask father that you bring this profound wisdom home to us every single one of us are just under rowers I am just an under rower and we father are called by you to steward the most important resource and most important gift that the world that there is in the world that the world desperately needs which is to understand who Jesus is in light of the bible and to understand the bible in light of who Jesus is that we might be made right with you by him crucified and that we would start to die to self deception and grow in true wisdom so father we ask that you would do these wonderful works in our hearts and we ask this in Jesus name amen without