

What You Is & Who You Aint

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 00] I'm delighted to have the opportunity to talk to you today. I'm feeling very well, and I don't know what you get out of Wednesdays, but I get an enormous amount out of the responsibility of trying to say something intelligible.

Even if I fail, I get a lot out of having tried. You presumably get quite a lot less. But it's good to be here.

Merv Hansen, who led in prayer, is responsible for picking me up out of the depths about two or three times a week or a month or something, so I should just express my gratitude to him.

This is to prove that I can make a computer work. But it also probably proves that I have an old one. The topic today is who you is and who you ain't.

And I have this little story to tell you. I have a bill from BC Hydro for \$390. It's to pay the hydro in the house that we moved out of last January.

[1 : 12] And so this is just informational background. The difficulty seems to be that while I communicated with the Hydro's agent that answers the telephone, I didn't get the message through to the Hydro's computer.

The agent was not prepared to become the victim of my wrath and indignation, and the computer couldn't care less how I felt about it.

The computer was only prepared to receive and acknowledge my check or to pass my name and number on to the computer of a collection agent that would make my life miserable in a series of communications produced by the computer over the next several months, until one solemn evening would come when there would be a knock at my door.

And I leave you to imagine the results of that. This predicament led me to write a letter explaining myself and my circumstances, and in effect saying, your computer doesn't understand me.

So when with ruthless detachment I got the latest message from the Hydro's computer, I was devastated. Mentally and emotionally, I was strongly overcome by anger and frustration.

[2 : 40] I phoned the Hydro and tried very calmly to explain my situation. The Hydro agent said, Oh, I got your letter.

And I had sent them a letter. So she then said to me, the Hydro's agent, I got your letter. I put it right.

Ignore the bill. I'll make sure it doesn't go to the collection agent. You can't live in two places at one time, and the computer should know that. Now, I was virtually dancing for joy when that conversation was over, because I felt I really had arrived at a personal contact with BC Hydro.

It was a lovely experience. However, this has to do with who you is and who you ain't.

And it's because the computer doesn't know who I am and has no way of being in touch with me or making contact with me.

[3 : 59] I read, I listened to a tape by Eugene Peterson this week, which was brilliant. And he said, I mean, he put very simply what I spent hours trying to say and stumble over and make a mess of.

But he put it all very brilliantly. And he said, Words serve two functions. One is to convey information. That's what an algebra teacher does to his class.

He conveys information. And that presumably is what computers do to us. They convey information. But Eugene Peterson went on to say, The fundamental purpose of words is not communication, but communion.

The relating of two people. And so what I've described to you in that little story is, when you pass from communicating with something or somebody, being in communion with it.

And this, I think, applies to God. Lots of people have been in communication with him and find him as impersonal and cold and indifferent and hard as any computer ever was.

[5 : 22] And they don't know what to do with it. But what they need to discover is that God wants not to communicate with them, but to have communion with them.

And that involves a relationship, which is generally described in the New Testament by the word love, which is a very abused word in our society.

And so it's difficult to read it and understand it. But that's the key word. Now, having taken all that, who you is, is somebody who needs to be in communion with God, not just in, and who you ain't is somebody who needs to be in communication with God.

You got the picture? You are someone who needs to be in communion with, not just in communication with. Can I confess to you that I went to the theater last night and saw *Private Lives*. And it's a story about communion and communication, too. It's very funny, but very depressing to me to see how difficult the problem of a husband communicating with a wife or a man communicating with a woman is.

[6 : 45] I mean, it's all very funny, their misunderstandings of each other, but it's also very discouraging because it's, well, I mean, what, you have supper with your wife and then you go to a theater and find the same problems are continuing right there in front of you.

You know. So, but it had its redemptive qualities, which I won't share with you.

Now, look at this text because I really am very, very, very excited about this text because I think Paul is being, well, I don't know whether you think being cynical is bad for St. Paul or not, but I think he's being enormously clever, enormously intelligent, and probably very cynical.

When he turns to the Corinthians, in all their mass sophistication, the philosophers and the wise men and the people who understand, understood the secrets and mysteries of human existence and how they denigrated the gospel, which Paul was preaching, and Paul says to them, well, I want you to know, look at it.

He says, we do, however, we, and he's not saying I, but he's saying we, that we have this as the fellowship of Christ's people.

[8 : 21] We do, however, convey certain information. And this was to a group of people who were very proud of the fact that they conveyed the ultimate information.

He says, we too do convey certain information. We speak a message of wisdom among the mature. And that's because, of course, the whole structure of their life was that if you were initiated, you know, it's, you know those secret societies we have in our, in our world, whom I won't name because probably you're all members of them.

Who talk about you will be initiated into this mystery and you will be allowed to know this and this secret wisdom that we have distilled, it will belong to us, you, if only you pay your dues and come and pass the following exams.

So, that's, that happens. And Paul says to those kinds of people, he says, we too have a certain wisdom that belongs to the initiating, to the mature, to the full grown.

He says, the difficulty is that it's not a wisdom of this age. And you know that wisdom and, the Greek word for wisdom is *Sophia*.

[9 : 42] It's, so, what he means is that it does, it's not a sophisticated wisdom that is highly, highly contemporary.

It's something else. It's not a wisdom that belongs to this age nor to the rulers of this age. The Jerusalem Bible calls them the masters of this age.

A kind of literal, or, what do you call it when you, when you say the, the actual, the archons of this age is what it is in Greek, you know.

And from archons we get people like archdemons and archbishops and archdeacons and architects and people who, who are, who are the people that set the standard, that, that build the, inner structures as it were, within which we are to, to which we are to submit and within which we are to live our lives.

And he says these are the rulers of this age and the wisdom that we're teaching you doesn't come from them. And, and he goes on, he can't help but put this dig in, that their particular wisdom is time-locked.

[10 : 59] that is, that in a generation from now it will be useless. The great ideas that generated the IBM, the IBM 40 years ago don't work.

I mean, that's one of the sort of facts of life that, that IBM is trying to phase up to. The great principles and ideas of a generation ago don't work in this generation. The great leaders who had

the emancipating ideas.

And in fact, the whole of our society at the end of the 20th century is littered with the rotting remains of the ideologies that we've exploited and discarded.

And they're all over the place. People are still digging through the garbage to see if there isn't a good idea that we've missed there. But by and large, that's what, that's what our world looks like. And, so Paul says this particular wisdom that we have for you doesn't belong to the rulers of this age, the wise men, the intellects, the philosophers.

[12:08] It doesn't belong to them. And there, the ones that do belong to them come to nothing. In the same sense that the book of Ecclesiastes explores all the bright ideas of the time in which he lived and said of them all, as we can also say, vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

It's all emptiness. It works for a while, but then it breaks down. One of the most damning things I've heard about Kim Campbell was by Perrin Bedi, who stepped out of the race saying, she's obviously the lady for this moment.

that's what Paul was saying, you know. We have the masters of our age who are good for a moment, but then they fade and someone else takes them on.

Remember that extremely successful, knowledgeable, experienced businessman from Bay Como in the double-breasted suits and the tailored shirts who came on to be Prime Minister of Canada, Brian Mulroney.

you know, and who had his age and now it's gone and we're looking for something new. Well, Paul plays on this theory when he says this wisdom is not that kind of wisdom which ultimately comes to nothing.

[13:30] Look at verse 7. We speak of God's secret wisdom, a hidden wisdom. Now, that secret wisdom is the way of getting around the Greek word which is behind it which is mystery.

And mystery confuses people in our society so they thought better not translate it directly. But this is God's mystery, a mystery that has been hidden and a mystery that God destined for our glory before time began.

Now, the contrast I want you to see here is this. this is if you want over here try next page I don't think that one worked to get this is this is the mystery this is the archon the leaders of our age you see and this was their wisdom and it was the accumulated wisdom of the whole of humanity in human history and you know how if you go outside a new age store you'll find that they have in little pieces of paper opportunities to gain the insight of the ages to go back a thousand years in oriental history to find the secret of how to keep your toes flexible and the all these hidden things this accumulation of human wisdom and it's vast and I make fun of it but we live by it most of the time it's the accumulation of knowledge of various kinds and that human wisdom and human history and this is what people come to the church full of this kind of wisdom and tell people how it should work but

Paul says it's not that that's not where we're standing where we're standing he says is based on the mystery and these are the characteristics of this mystery that it was there before time began this wisdom is all time locked this is mystery that was there before time began it was hidden so that no mind could devise it no eye could see it no ear could hear it it was a hidden mystery and it was the only way we know it is that God has revealed it and he says having revealed it he revealed it not in terms of a philosophical idea but he revealed it primarily in the person of Jesus Christ on the cross so the mystery is the word of the cross that's the source of human wisdom it's not that and he says the reason we know that that wisdom will not lead anywhere is because it was that wisdom look at the text was that wisdom which led to crucifying the

Lord of glory and so in a sense there's this terrible conflict between these two kinds of wisdom and this is the conflict that Paul is bringing out in this story when he says that this wisdom from here was destined for our glory now I find this really difficult to face you all and to look you in the eye and talk about that God has this glory because I feel like I'm being I feel like I'm selling you short and that you're much too wise and much too sophisticated to hear me but you see God's plan is our glory we who have stoically and philosophically and rationally and knowledgeably committed ourselves to despair don't like anybody coming along and saying there is a glory that belongs to our humanity which is yet to be revealed and that all we know of that glory for the moment is the reality of the word of the cross which is

[18:01] Jesus Christ and that's the clue we've been given to the glory that will be that it is a glory that is to be arrived at through suffering the Greek word for suffering flips this and it's a lovely word

to say as long as people are away from me but it's that's that's what what happens here so this is the glory this is the wisdom that Paul says belongs to the initiated not to those who are initiated in the wisdom of the world and mind you the reason you walk across Georgia Street with your head held high and a well tailored suit and shirt and you know and your shoes well polished and looking like the world belongs to you is because within the structures of the archons of this world you have a level of achievement but

Paul says there is another basic wisdom which is more profound in interpreting and understanding who we are and that wisdom is not the sum total of the derived wisdom of human understanding and intelligence that wisdom is the hidden wisdom of God which has been revealed in the cross now this is how Paul goes on here in this thing he talks about the way this wisdom is to be revealed is by the spirit if you look at the end of verse 10 the spirit searches all things even the deep things of God now I think Paul is being as cynical as possible when he says that you know he's talking to the religious merchants that going around and say would you like to know the deep things of God we'll let we'll introduce you to the deep things of

God and we'll introduce you to that hidden understanding but belongs to our society or something to sell the deep things of God Paul says alright if you want the deep things of God here they are right here that's where the deep things of God are to be found and they are to be found by the spirit capital S this this is the holy spirit and then he uses the very simple illustration which appeals enormously to me because there you sit and I'm looking at you and wondering what's going on in your mind and I have no idea what's going on in your mind you at least can listen to me and maybe tell what's maybe I doubt it but but the the what he says is and I suppose this is the frustration of being a human being is that we don't really know each other it's extremely difficult to get to know each other we tend to be very lonely we tend to be very isolated we can't get close to people we need a certain amount of drugs or alcohol to even begin to get close to one another because nobody understands anybody else except the spirit of that person and you can't do that to me you can't give me your spirit but it says that

God has given us his spirit so that it's possible to know the deep things of God more than it is to know the deep things of another person and that's the argument that he develops there in verse 11 who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit in the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the spirit of God and then he goes on to say we have not received the spirit of the world that is the spirit that comes from here because that is a kind of wisdom there is a spirit that belongs to that it's pervasive in our world we submit to it very readily but he says that is not our primary possession what we have as our primary possession is the indwelling spirit of God revealing to us the deep things of God we have the spirit who is from God that we may understand what God has freely given us so that this is this is how we are to understand

God is by the spirit that he has given us so that we can understand him and we can understand his purpose he goes on to say this is foolishness to this is foolishness to some it's that it's that Greek word moronic again it's it's it's it doesn't make any sense at all but if you have encountered the spirit of God then you understand the deep things of God and that's that's the function of the Holy Spirit that's why we have to live in this relationship look at the end of verse I just want to emphasize this again in verse nine the thing no eye has seen nor ear heard nor mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him it's that faith relationship and love relationship to God and God to us that allows communion to be established that allows

[23 : 55] God to communicate to us the things the spiritual truths by spiritual words it's that's the means by which God communicates to us the things that he has freely given us I'm quitting this is a quick summary of what I'm saying this wisdom then leads to nothing ultimately and that's Paul is not you know he's not being very respectful for the accumulated wisdom of humanity only because he says there is another kind of mystery or wisdom that man has tended to ignore they ignored it deliberately because we know because they crucified the Lord of glory but it was in him that God's wisdom was to be revealed and the mystery that is revealed and the reason that this mystery is there is that what it shows is that from before time began even to the end of time when the glory of God will be revealed God's hidden purpose which is to make known his love for you in the person of Jesus Christ has been there and Paul says this is different this is categorically different and who you is is not the person that is locked in to human wisdom that ultimately comes to nothing but the revealed wisdom of God in the person of Jesus Christ on the cross which is the means by which we

come to what we call glory which is a word way beyond the ability of our mind to comprehend what it might be it's there and you see what what one brilliant commentator said

I thought it was a brilliant statement he said I came to you and I preached not a beautiful philosophy but a crucified Christ that's why Paul says in this same chapter I'm resolved to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified he says I am not going to be battered down by the vast accumulation of human wisdom that I know ultimately comes to nothing I am resolved to know nothing save Jesus Christ and him crucified so that I think I can say this without wanting to offend anybody but I would like to say to you that who you is and who you ain't depends almost entirely on whether you know

Jesus Christ crucified whether this is the basis of your wisdom or whether this is let me say a prayer God we need we need to know your presence with us by your Holy Spirit we need your spirit in our hearts and we need to to love you not just to communicate with you but to be in communion with you so that you can reveal to us free gifts that you have for us so that you can reveal to us the spiritual truths in spiritual words so that we can encounter the wonderful good news which we could never discover which has been revealed to us in

Jesus Christ crucified God grant in your mercy that you will not let any of us escape from the intent of this message that we won't let any of us lift up any sort of proud structure of our own ambitions our own glory which is not fundamentally focused on the word of the cross we ask this in Jesus name amen