

## **A Message for Peacocks and Roosters**

### **1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

**Broadcast Dates: April 10-11, 2024**  
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The title of today's sermon is *A Message for Peacocks and Roosters*. We have had lots of kid stuff today. Kids love animals. Kids, this one is for you and might help simplify for all of us a passage that is a little complex.

We're talking today about peacocks and roosters. Peacocks are very beautiful. I read a book recently that marveled at the feathers of peacocks and the amazing complexity required to make the "eyes" in the feathers. Their beauty serves no real purpose except for the male to draw attention to himself. This is highly unusual among males in general except when they are trying to woo a female. Wives, this might subtly remind you of your husband on your first date. Male peacocks draw attention to themselves and what they can do.

A rooster is known for quite a different kind of boasting. A rooster crows to signal the sun is rising. Their morning crowing is to announce something else amazing. "The sun is rising! Look everyone! The day is dawning! Er-er-er-er-errr!" Roosters draw attention to something else. The peacock says, "Look what I can do." The rooster says, "Look what somebody else has done." The peacock draws attention to itself. A rooster draws attention to something else. The kids are with me. Adults, I didn't go to fast for you, did I?

From this perspective, let's remind ourselves of what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1 thus far. He begins by giving thanks to God for His work among them. He reminds the church in Corinth of the glory of their calling in Christ, their spiritual gifts, and their fellowship with Jesus. They needed to be reminded because they had messed all these things up. There was division and quarreling and problems on all kinds of levels. To this Paul says, *What are you doing? God has called you by His wisdom to a crucified Savior. This seems like folly to the world, but is actually the power and wisdom of God unto salvation.*

*For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)*

The great city of Corinth was wealthy and sophisticated for its day. It was a city of VIPs, Very Important People – celebrities, famous philosophers, politicians, athletes and businessmen. In Chicago, this would be those that live on the Gold Coast and shop the Magnificent Mile and attend the balls and black tie social functions. Everyone clamored not only to be around them, but to be them. There also was the other end of the social ladder, the Not Important People; the have-nots; the people that shop at Target and call it *Targét*.

We might expect the great apostle Paul to have appealed to the rich and famous in Corinth. He was the apostle Paul, after all. But this was not the case at all. Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians of their social status when God graciously called them.

## Demographical Reminder (Verse 26)

*For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.*

Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians that they don't come from the Gold Coast society of Corinth. They weren't the power brokers of Corinth. They didn't come from the famous families of Corinthian culture. Notice that it says "not many" of you. There were some who were from the privileged parts of society. Those include Sosthenes and Crispus and Gaius and Erastus. Christianity permeated every aspect of the Roman world, so there were some from the high ends of society, just not many.

The gospel has always found a much better hearing among the disenfranchised; the down and outers; the poor. Jesus said that it is very hard for a **rich man** to enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 19:23). Why? His money is his stumbling block to saving faith because he wants to trust his riches and glory in the fact that he has them.

It's hard for the **wise and powerful** to enter the kingdom of God for the same reason. I remember talking with a politician once about spiritual things. This person said to me, "Why do I need God? I am the (he stated his position in government)." It's hard to humble yourself before a crucified Savior when you are "powerful;" when you are a somebody in man's eyes.

And not many were from **noble birth**. It's interesting that Paul would say this because he himself was born to an influential family. He was born a Roman citizen which was the highest distinction of the day. Yet, not many in the early church were like this. I've always liked the quip, "Some people were born on third base and think they hit a triple." It's hard when you've been born to fame or fortune not to think you're special in some way.

For these reasons, the gospel has always found a more receptive hearing among the have-nots. For example, there were 60,000,000 slaves in the Roman Empire. The gospel spread like wildfire amongst the slave population. A slave was a possession; an "it." The gospel told them God loved them too. The gospel provided personhood, love, and hope. Slaves loved the gospel. History shows that the kind of people who were attracted to Christianity were actually a source of mockery among the VIPs of the Roman Empire.

In 178 AD a pagan Roman philosopher named Celsus wrote sarcastically about Christians: *"Let no cultured person draw near, none wise and none sensible, for all that kind of thing we count evil; but if any man is ignorant, if any man is wanting in sense and culture, if anybody is a fool, let him come boldly [to become a Christian]...We see them in their own houses, wool dresses, cobblers, the worst, the vulgarest, the most uneducated persons...They are like a swarm of bats or ants creeping out of their nest, or frogs holding a symposium around a swamp, or worms convening in mud."*

Celsus' opinion of Christians is alive and well today in American culture as well. Think of how the media or the universities or Hollywood looks on someone who is a Bible-believing, born again Christian. Eyes roll. People snicker. They can't believe anybody would believe such a thing. Christianity is for small-minded and unenlightened people.

The former governor of Minnesota called organized religion "a sham and a crutch for weak-minded people who need strength in numbers." He went on to make the hilariously contradictory statement that he "can't stand intolerant people." A more serious example is the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche whose teaching nearly took over the world in

the last century. Nietzsche came from a long line of pastors and preachers. His own father was a pastor. Nietzsche came to despise Christian doctrine. He saw Jesus as a weakling and a failure. His conclusion was that Jesus was a fool and God was dead. Hitler embraced his philosophy of power over weakness and nearly took over the Western world. Ideas have consequences and bad ideas have bad consequences. To this, God's Word says:

*But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:27-29)*

The basis for Paul's statement here is understanding....

### **Why God Does What He Does – His Glory! (Verse 30)**

We have taught on this many times as it is the overarching theme of all of Scripture and redemptive history. Why does God do what He does? At the basis of it all is the unveiling and magnifying of His glory. God's glory is His inherent worth and supremacy; the infinite value of the majesty of who He is. Since He is infinitely glorious, He defends that glory against any who would profane it. Romans 3:23 tells us that sin is, at its essence, falling short of the glory of God. Sin is actions and attitudes that don't display or magnify God's glory. The universe was created to display His glory; the heavens declare the glory of God. (Psalm 19:1) The angels praise God saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" (Isaiah 6:3) The universe is a song about God's glory. Into this beauty entered sin. Sin profanes God's glory. God defends His glory in a fallen world by judging and punishing those who profane Him. The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Jesus came to satisfy the glory of God's justice by dying on the cross for our sins. By faith we are restored to what we were made to be and all of this is "for the praise of his glory." (Ephesians 1:12) Behind all that has happened or will happen is God's glory.

- *I am the LORD; that is my name; my glory I give to no other, (Isaiah 42:8)*
- *For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another. (Isaiah 48:11)*

Central to this is God's redemption of sinners. Here is the dilemma: if you were God, how would you save prideful sinners, peacocks, who love to boast in themselves without them having anything to boast in? A works-based salvation would only provide an opportunity for their boasting in themselves. Targeting the VIPs of society would give the VIP types a reason to glory in their money, status, or wisdom.

So if you are God and you want to save sinners without them having anything to boast about, what do you do? This is what God has done. God turns the human way of looking at things completely upside down. The world values human wisdom; God chose what seems foolish (Christ crucified, verse 23). The world values strength; God gives them the weakness of the cross. The world values VIPs; God chooses to save the "low and despised," or as verse 28 says, the nothings. Why? *So that no human being might boast in [his] presence. (Verse 29)* This gospel, which seems foolish to the wise, weak to the strong, beneath the dignity of the important people of the world, is this way by God's intent. So that there is not even the smallest basis for anyone who is saved to say, "Look at me!"

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

Another way to say this is that there are no peacocks in heaven. No one will be able to stand before God and say, "Look at me! Look at what I have done!" Friends, we have done NOTHING! He has done EVERYTHING! Salvation is all of grace. It is all of Him. Like everything else, it is all about Him!

We should rejoice that God doesn't target the pretty people or the brilliant people or the wealthy people or the powerful people. He loves them too, but the people God chooses to save are the humble people who repent of their sins and put all their faith in what God did for them through Christ and His death on our behalf.

*He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. (1 Corinthians 1:30)*

Reinforcing this Paul says, God is the source of spiritual life. Christ is our righteousness, sanctification, redemption. Where is there room for any of us to boast in ourselves? It is silly when all we have was given to us. It doesn't come from us. Faith is a gift from God. Who brags about something you receive?

How many of your families like to play card games? My family does. You know what happens when a family member gets that magical hand of cards – all trump or all face cards, whatever. What do they do? They get all cocky. You can just tell by the look on their face that they are going to win. They put the cards down, "Read 'em and weep!" When I am on the losing end of that, I just want to say, "What are you so cocky about? Those cards were given to you. You didn't do anything at all! So quit acting like you did!"

In the Corinthian church, the members were getting cocky and full of themselves. Their pride was creating divisions in the church. Later we will see how some of them were eating the Lord's Supper separately from the others. They were acting all VIP. Paul says, *What are you doing? What have you done in all this? Don't you remember that you were nothing before God saved you by His grace? Salvation was given to you. It is all of Him.*

### **What Are We to Do? – Glory (Boast) in the Lord (Verse 31)**

*Therefore, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:31)*

Did you know there is a good kind of bragging? The Greek word for boast means "to take pride in" or "to glory in." We tend to see the word as negative because most of the boasting we do is us boasting about ourselves. Peacocks say, "Look at me! Look what I can do! Aren't I amazing?"

Obviously, God isn't encouraging self-promoting kind of boasting. We could do a whole message on bragging since we are so prone to it. There are times when I say things and later I just want to punch myself in the mouth. Why did I feel the need to share with them how wonderful I think I am? Have you ever had a peacock moment?

This passage isn't encouraging that kind of boasting. There is a right way to boast. *Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.* What does that mean? Paul is quoting Jeremiah 9:23-24.

*Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD."*

What do men of our world boast in? How smart they are. How strong they are. How rich they are. *Look at me! I am really something.* God says that all such boasting comes to nothing. Who are we to glory in? Let him who boasts boast that he knows me. That He is in relationship with the LORD who is filled with love, justice, and righteousness. For in this, I delight. God loves it when we glory in knowing Him.

This brings us back to peacocks and roosters. A peacock draws attention to himself and shows what he can do. What is a rooster most famous for? Crowing in the morning, "Er-er-er-errr!" If we knew the "Chickenese" language, what would we understand the rooster to be saying? He's saying to anyone who will listen, "Look at the sun. The sun is rising! I want you all to get up and see it. I want everyone to see the sun!"

Here is the question for us today, *Is my life more like the peacock or the rooster? Does the shape of my time and motivations for why I do what I do resemble the peacock or the rooster?* Look at me or look at the Son. *Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.*

### **Qualities of "Boasting in the Lord"**

*Profound gratitude to God  
More "God" than "me" talk  
Okay with not getting the credit  
Lots of thanksgiving to God in prayer  
Lots of thanksgiving to God in conversation  
Quick to forgive others for Jesus' sake*

*A Kingdom first mentality  
A servant's heart  
Generosity to God  
Joy in praising Him  
Loving others enough to share the gospel  
He must increase, I must decrease*

At the core of it is this: *I can't believe God would save someone like me!* Song lyrics capture this:

*Who am I? That the Lord of all the earth,  
Would care to know my name, Would care to feel my hurt.  
Who am I? That the bright and morning star,  
Would choose to light the way, For my ever wandering heart.  
Not because of who I am, But because of what You've done.  
Not because of what I've done, But because of who You are.  
(Who Am I? Casting Crowns, Copyright 2003, Reunion Records, CCLI # 3287884)*

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night.  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,  
I woke - the dungeon flamed with light!  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed thee.  
Amazing love! how can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me!  
(And Can It Be? Charles Wesley, Public Domain)*

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