

Paradox of the Cross Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time Friday, August 31, 2018 **1**
Cor 17-25; Mt 25:1-13 (There are all kinds of problems in the world, but in the cross of Christ they have all been subsumed.)

“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

Now some saints get a little carried away in talking about the cross. For example St. Rose of Lima said if people only knew what bliss, what grace, what joy is available to those who suffer, they would go out and seek affliction, pain, torture, infirmity rather than prosperity. Well that might be a little exaggerated. In my experience **we don't have to seek out pain or suffering.** It seeks us out. It is part of life. It is unavoidable. It comes in many forms, but **it's unavoidable because we are created for God, and until we experience God as St. Rose did, we will be less than we can be, and that will be a kind of suffering.**

Now we may or may not actually be sensitive to the suffering. Some people fill their lives up with so many distractions they don't even notice their emptiness. But why are they doing that? Well because even unconsciously they recognize their emptiness, the vanity of life. So St. Paul's point is that, yes, **there are all kinds of problems in the world, but in the cross of Christ they have all been subsumed,** and that if we are believers, we should never be dismayed at problems or pains or suffering or affliction or persecution or even infirmity, because there's absolutely nothing that can take away the love of God. And not only that, but in the cross **Jesus has already reconciled to himself everything, so that everything works out for those who love God.** That doesn't mean we can figure out how it works out; well no, we can't. **Life remains a mystery.** Life's designer has a mind that is infinite; we have very limited participations in that mind. But Paul's point is that **there is absolutely no reason for a real believer to lose faith or to despair or to really live in any kind of darkness or depression.**

Now he points out that there are certain people who want signs. He says, “Jews seek signs,” well, Jews and many others. That is a certain way of looking at life, let life prove something. There are Christians that look for signs as well. “Greeks seek wisdom.” Well there are some Christians who seek wisdom too. And that isn’t bad to seek wisdom. Paul’s point however is **wisdom is found in the foolishness of God in a way that human sophistication can never achieve.**

Now there are certain Christians that have this idea; it’s a superstition that if I do what’s right, if I live a good life, if I am faithful, if I follow the laws, if I follow the rules, then I will be preserved. That is superstition. **No one has ever been preserved.** The desire for self-preservation is an instinct that nature has wisely encoded in our DNA so that we don’t foolishly endanger ourselves, but **it is by no means the goal of life to preserve ourselves.** So Jesus said, “He who preserves himself loses himself; he who loses himself finds himself.” This is the paradox and the mystery of the cross.