The Voided Cross

The message of the cross can be made void, which is the idea that it loses the designed effect that God wanted the cross to have. Jesus said, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” (John 12:32). His own crucifixion is designed to be what draws us closer to himself, to do his will. So when Paul preached, he made sure they would be drawn by the cross, and the cross directly. Paul was sent to “preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void.” (1Cor.1:17).

You can draw people through “cleverness of speech”, comedians try to do this all the time. But comedians are not trying to turn people back to do God’s will. Politicians will use “cleverness of speech” to try and get you to vote for them, but they are not interested in turning people’s hearts back to obeying God. No. Paul had one way he was going to draw people, and if they were not interested in understanding the message of the cross, they were not going to be drawn to church at all. So Paul was not going to add a little cleverness of speech to his preaching to add more people. No.

Paul knew that God had already made a determination about how he was planning to call people, draw people. “God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness, (1 Cor. 1:21-23). Paul could have attracted more people if he was more of a comedian, more of a miracle worker, more wise in the worldly sense. But God had already vetoed this idea. The social gospel asks “what do people want, what is their felt need?”. The true gospel asks, “what does God want, what is man’s eternal need”?

Jesus saw the crowd’s motivation was merely for physical advantages, “Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.” (John 6:26). But the true disciples were following Jesus out of a different motivation, “Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. “We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.” (John. 6:68-69). Some are motivated by mere bread, but the disciples are motivated by the bread of life, the words that Jesus spoke. Jesus himself was motivated out of his love for the Father and for us. This love is communicated most effectively, through the cross. Out of this same love, let us be drawn to him and obey him. Dan Peters