

All things belong to God

Series on Church Leadership

Reading of the Scripture and Pray

1 Corinthians 3:18-23

¹⁸ Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become “fools” so that you may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness”; ²⁰ and again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” ²¹ So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas ²³ or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God. ¹

Introduction

Akuve kumangaza ukubona abantwana bebanga abazali, fighting on whose better parent and how a certain parent belongs to the other, ubezwa bethi uma wami lo! Nomunye ubaba wami lo! Only if they could understand that both parents are for them and are there to serve them and that whether you choose mom or dad both are necessary and play an important role in your growth. In other words, whether you prefer one over the other they are both necessary for your growth, you do need them both. Paul will be getting into something like this namhlanje.

Here, he is bringing his thought together on the issue of factions and wisdom that he has been dealing with in Ch.1-3, now ushayelela ispikili on pointing out that all things belong to God, therefore, the Corinthians are ought not to boast about their leaders but boast to the one who gives all things. He will do that by showing us that worldly wisdom is foolishness in the eyes of God,

¹ Anon, 2011. [The New International Version](#), Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

therefore, those who want to be wise they need to be foolish towards the things of this world since it doesn't lead anyone into the knowledge of who God and into redemption that is found in Christ and so that they will be wise; the second thing that he will show us is that all things belong to God, therefore, all glory need to go to God who has enriched the Corinthians with all things even their Leaders.

The wisdom of the world is foolish to God (v.18-20)

There are two things that Paul wants the Corinthians to do in regards to the wisdom that he has been talking about in ch.1:18;2, is that (1) they should not deceive themselves in v.18a, and think that they are wise because they hold diplomas, degrees, honours, masters and PHD's or they have special skills in certain things or certain knowledge about traditional religion and Politics, these things God regards them foolish as they drive one away from the real truth, as we have seen how Jews demanded the signs and Greeks wanted wisdom. I'm not saying that people shouldn't study or it wrong to have the above knowledge but I am saying that seeking the reality and meaning of life through those, God regards that as foolishness. As we have seen that the true wisdom comes from God through Christ, Jesus is the power of God and the wisdom of God in Ch.1v24, it is through faith in Christ that we can grasp our purpose in this world does find the meaning of this life.

The second thing that Paul wants Corinthians to do is for those who think that they are wise according to the standards of this world to become fools in v.18b, so that they can be wise, why? Because as we have seen true wisdom comes from God and found in Christ, secondly we don't get it through what we do but we receive it from God through the Spirit; in the book of James, we are told to ask for wisdom from God.

Paul quotes two OT passages to help us see his point here, he quotes in the book of Job ch.5:13 where one of Jobs friends who are regarded as scholars or very wise people are trying to give Job advice regarding his situation, in this chapter God shows how foolish they are because they have no clue about the workings of God "he catches the wise in their craftiness;" therefore it better to be a fool when it comes into the things of this world. The second Scripture that he quotes it's in the book of Psalms 94:11 "the Lord knows that the

thoughts of the wise are futile,” again here he shows us that what the world calls wisdom is futile, ngesikhathi sobandlululo uHendrik Verwoed wafika nesu lokuthi abantu abanyama mababe bodwa, abamhlophe babe bodwa, he was and still is celebrated and considered as a wise person among his followers but God considered it as stupid, what more with this Psalm some is that it shows us that God is aware of all the injustice that is caused by those who consider themselves as wise and God as non-existing and unaware of their sins. God will bring about justice at the right time and will show the world how foolish it is with those who trusted in its wisdom and will rescue and continue to be with those who are regarded as fools for trusting in him. Mark says in his gospel it is better to lose your life in this world and find it in eternity rather than to gain the whole world and lose your life at the end.

All things belong to God (v.21-23)

Here Paul brings closure into how leaders are to be perceived and how they are to approach the ministry, of which he has been dealing with in Ch.3:1-17, he has been using metaphors of the field, to show that leaders are servants that serve the field of which Corinthians are the field and God is the one who brings about growth; he used the picture of the building where leaders are contributors in building the structure but God is the engineer of the building. Therefore, in v.21, Paul commands the Corinthians **“So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours.”** The statement of “all things are yours” is revolutionary! It appeals to their status and transforms how they view themselves, let me go back to my introduction, where kids are quarrelling about who belongs to mom and who belongs to daddy, to say to your kids “guys you know that instead of fighting for each of us you have two of us belonging to you (plural), we are here for you both of us, you no longer have one but two for you!” suddenly fighting for one looks stupid while you can have two for you.

Paul is getting into something like that here but bigger than that, let look at v.22-23 **“whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas ^u or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God,”** Paul here first helps our leaders how they ought to view ministry, he says he and other leaders belong to the Corinthians, not the other way around not like the Corinthians Philosophers

that the church was influenced by, who had followers that belong to them and fight for them on who is better; this is changing the culture, leaders are there to serve the church not the other way around. He also helps the church on how they are to view their leaders, firstly they are to view them as servants who are there to serve them, secondly that these servants are placed by God for their growth, in their different gifts, whether you prefer Rabelane's preaching or Mgoza's preaching over the others you are robbing yourself to appreciate the variety of gifts that God deemed necessary for your growth, they are there for you. Lastly, the church is to view these leaders as one among many brothers and sisters, they are not superior to the church, but are all in Christ belonging to God, the church is to view them as equals given the task to care for their brothers and sisters in the Lord.

The other thing here is that being in Christ also means that Corinthians are heirs with Christ, so all that God has promised Christ to inherit that is the whole world the church will participate in that inheritance for the fact that they are in Christ, this is massive, why busy yourself with fighting over your leaders while they are there for you and more than that while you will inherit the whole world at the end with them. Paul closes by pointing out that all things belong to God, not meaning that Jesus is subordinate to God or that Jesus is not God but that all that Jesus did while He was here on earth He was fulfilling the will of God the Father. If then God is at the centre of all things, therefore, stop boasting about your leaders but boast in God who has given you redemption through Christ, who has given you his Spirit and leaders that you have. All things belong to you in Christ and Christ belong to God, therefore, praise God!

Reflection question

- In what ways has your culture or other cultures influenced you the way you view leadership, especially Church leadership?
- How's the passage challenged you?
- What are some of the things you will need to change in the way you have treated or think about your leaders at CCS?