



Wednesday Prayer

3rd Sunday in Lent – Faith and Foolishness

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For Jews demand signs and Greek desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those of us who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. 1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-25

Bunkeo Bounma grew up as a Buddhist in the land-locked country of Laos that had been embroiled in civil war and drawn into the Vietnam War. He survived many atrocities at the hands of powerful people but was fortunate to escape the country and get his young family to a refugee camp in Thailand. While there, a priest came through passing out flyers about Holy Week and Easter services. Bunkeo was intrigued by this God who was unlike any he had known before, who came into the world as a human, fed the hungry, welcomed the stranger and was willing to die to save believers from their sins. *"Many people had tried to kill me, but nobody had ever been willing to die for me, except this Jesus"* were his initial thoughts and he could hardly believe that he, too, could be saved. After many conversations with the priest, he and his family were baptized. When they came to the US, they found other Laotian Christians, and because of his deep passion for teaching and preaching about God's salvation, he rose to leadership and was later ordained into Word and Sacrament ministry in the ELCA.

To those of us who grew up active in Christianity, the story of the God of Abraham, the birth, ministry and crucifixion of Christ is accepted with faith. But for those who did not grow up with these core beliefs, just like many in first-century Palestine, the scenario can seem scandalous and foolish. Some Christians may be quiet about their faith when those who advocate for the marginalized are mocked, for fear of looking foolish, or weak.

But God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. God's proclamation of the gospel works through many people – from the pulpit, through everyday acts of kindness, or by praying, teaching and advocating for justice through Cherish All Children. Because Paul preached Christ crucified to the people in Corinth, and the Thai priest passed out flyers in a refugee camp, and Bunkeo Bounma preached and taught and cared for new immigrants, generations have come to know that they are not *"nobodies"* but are God's dearly beloved, saved by Christ who was willing to die for them. Continue to share the gospel in loving and patient ways.

God of life, you have adopted us as your sons and daughters through the waters of baptism and allowed us to pass through the shadow of death into the light and life of salvation. Draw us into community for strength and encouragement to preach your gospel always. Amen.