

"Lost in Translation" 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Introduction

- At about the age of five or six I came down with the chickenpox. While I was scratching and itching, in between the calamine lotion and the baths, my mom taught me the song "Take Me Out to the Ballgame." I think I became a baseball fan right then and there.
- I don't know if you've tried to use those translator tools on the internet. Google has one. You can take any English word or phrase or sentence, type it in, and click the mouse and get a translation in almost any language. There's a guy who took the song "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" and translated it into German and then back into English just to see how good the translation was.¹
- You know the song.
 - *Take me out to the ballgame. Take me out to the crowd. Buy me some peanuts and Crackerjack. I don't care if I ever get back. For its root, root, root for the home team. If they don't win, it's a shame. For its one, two, three strikes you're out at the old ballgame.*
- Here's the song after being translated into German and then back into English. Somehow, I don't think this is what the song is trying to convey.
 - *Execute me to the ball play. Execute me with the masses. Buy me certain groundnuts and crackerstackfusig. I'm not interested if I never receive back. Let me root, root, root for the main team. If they do not win, it is dishonor. For there are one, two, three impacts on you at the old ball play.*
- Clearly, something got lost in the translation.
- One of the great ironies of Easter is that it is possible for the message of Easter to get lost in translation. What do I mean? The words of Easter are simple enough. They are as simple as "Take me out to the Ballgame." *Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.* Those are the words of Easter. You've probably heard them a thousand times. But those words, as simple as they are, can be lost in translation.
- Our minds are like that computer translator. Words are input, and to the best of our ability, with all our experiences, and our capacity for understanding, we translate those words into some kind of intelligible message our minds can grasp. But you know what? Just like that computer translator, it's possible to ascribe a meaning that is garbled, or nonsensical, or incomplete or even the completely wrong meaning—just like "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" in German.
- What I find remarkable is that even for those who lived with Jesus, who ate with him, and walked with him, and heard his words. For Jesus' closest followers, his disciples, the meaning of Easter was lost in translation. Luke 9. Jesus said to his disciples. *"Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the*

¹ Lee Strobel, *Meet the Jesus I Know*, (Preaching Today Audio No. 211)

*hands of men." But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it.*² Lost in translation.

- And maybe the most striking passage from Luke 18. *Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again." The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.*³ Lost in translation.

Transition

How about you? You're here for another Easter. Are you sure you know what Easter is all about? *Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.* Those are the words of Easter. Has the meaning of Easter been lost in translation? This morning I want to look at a passage in the bible that clearly explains why, for some, the message of Easter is lost in translation. If you haven't yet done so please turn in your bibles to 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. I think what God says in this passage is clear.

Proposition

- **We all need major help in order to understand the meaning of Easter**
- The Bible clearly teaches that the message of Easter, as simple as it is, cannot be fully understood without help. On our own, left to our unaided human faculties and reason and intellect and wisdom—with nothing else helping us—we will miss the meaning of Easter. It remains veiled. It's meaning shrouded in darkness. We need major help to understand the meaning of Easter. Again, the words of Easter are simple. *Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.* But without major help, the meaning of Easter remains lost in translation.

Transition

If you'll allow me to, I'd like to share with you why. I want to share with you...

Organizational Sentence

- **Three reasons we need major help to understand the meaning of Easter**

Transition

Let me explain to the first reason why. Look at [verse 6-10](#). Listen. *We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"— 10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.*

Main Points

² Luke 9:44-45

³ Luke 18:31-33

- The **first reason** as to why you and I need major help is because **without help the message of Easter remains hidden**. Look at **verse 7**. The Bible says that Jesus' death on the cross and the empty tomb on Easter morning—those two things—they demonstrate God's secret wisdom. In other words, those events have meaning. There is wisdom behind what God is doing through those events—they hint at something—something so spectacular and amazing and radical and glorious. In fact the rest of **verse 7** says that the wisdom of Easter results in glory for us—if we are able to uncover the significance. It makes you want to know what Easter means, doesn't it? But we need help.
- The problem is that the wisdom behind Easter is unavailable unless we're given access to it. It's *secret* as **verse 7** says. It's *hidden*. As hard as you look, you won't find it on your own. You have to be shown it. And even if you could gain access to this secret wisdom it's the kind of wisdom that's too deep to be understood. You'd never come up with what God had in mind on your own. God's plan behind the cross and empty tomb is inconceivable. *No mind has conceived it* as the text says. In fact, the rulers of Jesus' day, they couldn't even imagine what God had in mind. And because his wisdom was hidden from them, as **verse 8** says, *they crucified the Lord of glory*.
- See, here's the twist. You can know the facts of the Easter story backwards and forwards. Up and down. Left and right. Blindfolded with one hand behind your back. But if you don't have help, you'll have facts but no meaning. Without help Easter's meaning is hidden, lost in translation.
- Have you ever been on a lake or walked a stream and tried to look through water on a bright sunny day? It's impossible. Why? Light, called glare, bounces off the water and distorts our vision so that what's under the surface is hidden from our gaze. But what happens when you put polarized glasses on? Polarized lenses filter out the glare so that you can see under the surface of things.
- Look at **verse 10**. The Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity, is like a good pair of polarized lenses. *But God has revealed it by his Spirit*. The only way you'll ever get Easter, the only way you'll ever be able to see under the surface of things, is if God's Holy Spirit explains it to you. "[The message of a crucified and resurrected Messiah] is fundamentally incomprehensible to the mind without the Spirit."⁴ Without the Holy Spirit the meaning of Easter is lost in translation.

Transition

But more than just being hidden, **without help the message of Easter is unknowable**. That's the **second reason** why you and I need major help. Look at **verse 10**. *The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.*

- I want you to take a second and think of something that only you know. That shouldn't be too hard. Think of something that no other person in the world would know except you. Got it? Let's say the person sitting next to you decided they wanted to know what's on your mind.

⁴ Carson, *The Cross and Christian Ministry*, p.

Could they? Yes and no. Right? "No" if you don't want to tell them. But "yes" if you decide to spill the beans. **Verse 11.** *For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.* The reason we need major help to understand the meaning of Easter is because, unless it's revealed to us, the meaning of Easter is unknowable. It's a matter in the mind of God and no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God—just like no one knows what's on your mind except your spirit within you. Without the Holy Spirit the meaning of Easter is lost in translation.

- Our son Ethan has a set of play armor complete with helmet, sword, belt, and shield. And on the back of the shield there's a warning label to prevent someone from using this five millimeter thick piece of plastic as a real shield. This is what the warning imprinted on the shield says. And I quote. "Caution: The simulated protective device was not safety device and offered no protection." It's obvious, whoever who wrote those words was not communicating clearly. Are you hearing me or is what I'm saying being lost in translation? We need major help.

Transition

That brings us to the **third reason** why you and I need major help. **Without help the message of Easter cannot be accepted.** Listen to what the Bible says. **Verse 14.** *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: 16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*

- It's one thing for something to be hidden. It's another thing for something to be unknowable. But to not accept something implies culpability—responsibility. Getting Easter hinges on whether or not you have made a conscious, personal choice to accept the Holy Spirit's help. If you don't have the help of the Holy Spirit you won't be able to accept the meaning of Easter. **Verse 14.** *The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.* Easter is lost in translation. Its meaning is foolishness. It cannot be understood.
- Look back at **verse 12.** *We can understand what God has freely given us.* God wants us to understand. Remember, it's to our benefit that we know and understand—it's for our *glory* as **verse 7** says. By the power of the cross and the empty tomb God defeats death so that it has no sting, he saves us from slavery to sin and adopts us into his family, he brings life to our dead spirits so that we can commune with him, he gives us eternal life so that we might serve him forever. *He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.* That's the glory that is Easter. But the proviso is we must accept the help God offers. We won't be able to understand or accept the meaning of Easter provided we *receive* his Spirit. The Holy Spirit is like an antenna enabling us to pick up the right signal. Listen to how one wise man put it. "Anyone whose equipment is only of this world, who has not received the Holy Spirit, has no ability to make an estimate of things spiritual. 'The unspiritual are out of court as religious critics; they are deaf men judging music.'"⁵ We need help or the meaning of Easter is lost.

⁵ Morris, p. 59.

- You see the key question this morning is not "do I know what Easter is about?" Most of us have heard the message of Easter over and over. *Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.* The key question is do you want the Holy Spirit's help? The key question is "have I been trying to understand Easter without the spiritual apparatus God provides to make Easter meaningful?" The key question is, "do you have the Spirit of God living within you so that Easter means what it was intended to mean?"
- That begs the question. How do you know if have the Holy Spirit living within you? One of the ways you can tell is by the way you live. The Bible says if you are controlled by your passions, your urges, your lusts, if you have no power to control those desires—whatever they may be—then you don't have the Holy Spirit's help. Jude 19. *If you follow mere natural instincts [you] do not have the Spirit.* If you are a slave to an addiction or a way of thinking or a lifestyle that in your heart of hearts you know is contrary to God's law then you don't have God's Holy Spirit. Life with the Holy Spirit is spelled out in Romans 8:9. *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.* One is slavery, the other is freedom. Where the Spirit is there's freedom. If you continually do the things you don't want to do it's because you haven't received God's offer of help. Let me illustrate. In a poem entitled, "Autobiography in Five Short Chapters," [Portia Nelson](#) writes these words:

Chapter I:

I walk down the street.
 There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
 I fall in.
 I am lost ... I am helpless.
 It isn't my fault.
 It takes forever to find a way out.

Chapter II:

I walk down the same street.
 There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
 I pretend I don't see it.
 I fall in again.
 I can't believe I am in the same place,
 but it isn't my fault.

Chapter III:

I walk down the same street.
 There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
 I see it is there.
 I still fall in ... it's a habit.
 My eyes are open.
 I know where I am.
 It is my fault.
 I get out immediately.

Chapter IV:

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

Chapter V:

I walk down another street.

- It's impossible to avoid the hole or walk down another street without the help of the Holy Spirit. The way to receive the Holy Spirit is to become born again, or *born of the Spirit* if you'll recall the words Jesus used when speaking to Nicodemus. It means realizing the reason you're continually in the deep hole is because of your sin. And God asks that you turn away from that sin, renounce thinking and acting that gives no thought to God, kneel at the foot of the cross. Galatians 5:24 says it like this. You must crucify *the sinful nature with its passions and desires*. It means asking the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the true meaning of Easter. Right now. In your heart as you pray, as best you know how, to God, the one who raised Christ from the dead. It means telling God that you accept the help of his Spirit. And it means trusting God that if you reach out for him, if you seek him for help, you will find that he is not far from you.⁶
- One of the great stories of Easter happens following the Jesus' resurrection as two of his disciples walk along the road to Emmaus. Even after Jesus' resurrection, the meaning of that first Easter morning was lost in translation to them. Luke 24:25-27 says it like this. [Jesus] *said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.* Lost in translation.
- Then something happens. A little later, catch what Jesus does. *He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day. Ask him and right now and he'll open your mind as to the meaning of Easter. Don't spend another Easter lost in translation.*

Conclusion

- In our house, we've been reading the Mrs. Piggle series of books by [Betty McDonald](#). My favorite is *Mrs. Piggle Wiggle's Magic*. Mrs. Piggle Wiggle is this eccentric woman who loves children and helps parents cure common childhood ailments with her magic; ailments such as "Won't-Put-Away-Toys-it is", and "Answerbackism," and "Fighter-Quarrelitis." Parents bring Mrs. Piggle Wiggle "The Interrupters." And "The Never-Want-to-Go-to-Schoolers." And she cures them. My particular favorite is "The Thought-You-Saiders." Ethan and I have had a lot of fun around the dinner table with this one. The problem of the "Thought-You-Saiders" is that they find pleasure in willfully misunderstanding others' speech in amusing ways. For instance, "This'll fix it" becomes "Whistle biscuit." You get the idea.

⁶ Acts 17:27.

- This morning, I've tried to do everything in my power to be clear and plain as to why for some the message of Easter is lost in translation. I've tried to tell you what will fix it. If through my words of "this'll fix it" all you hear is "whistle biscuit," if the cross and resurrection remains veiled, if Easter is lost in translation, it is because of rebellion and unbelief. Don't give in to unbelief. Make a conscious choice to open your heart to Jesus and Easter won't be lost in translation. Pray with me.