Lownes Free Church                                                          Sunday Morning – September 16, 2018

The Apostle Paul’s Second letter to the Corinthians  
how the Cross changes everything

Text: 2 Corinthians 11:1-15 “Do you not realize what is at stake?”

***The Background: Mistaking the gospel risks your soul’s salvation***.

If there were “many paths to God,” it would be foolish to be too concerned about an error in someone’s theology. And why do missions at all? What would count then would be sincerity, or so the story goes. But Paul has been emphasizing, throughout the book, the uniqueness of the gospel and the “weakness” in the Cross. The sacrifice of Jesus is the only way to be made right with God, and so to follow “another Jesus” or to believe “another gospel” is to despise grace and turn instead to a man-made, self-righteous religion. Rejecting Jesus is idolatry. Gal. 1:6-10; 1 Jn. 5:10-12

**Discernment: The Cross decisively calls out counterfeit spirituality**.

Paul’s passionate pleas to the Corinthians intensify because he sees they are being deceived by “super-apostles” who present a false gospel and a false Jesus. This can mean only that the true life and ministry of Jesus as the Son of God who died for sinners was being recast into other forms. Precisely what forms we do not know: Maybe it’s about Jesus as a good teacher or moral example. Perhaps the gospel of “insider secrets” about God or special visions of heaven. But it is God’s grace in the gospel of forgiveness that separates it from all so-called religions. This is how and why the Cross changes everything.

The Narrative: (Reading 2 Corinthians is like hearing one side of a phone conversation. But we don’t really have to guess much, since Paul is both explicit and passionate. That said, we’ll be paraphrasing each section to sort out the argument and the not-so-hidden assumptions the Corinthians were making about Paul and his actions.)

(1) Humor me a little more while I sound a little foolish! Truth is that I am jealous over you with a God-like jealousy, having given you in marriage as a chaste bride to Christ. But now you seem to be in danger of being seduced by evil just as was Eve! I say that because when the “superapostles” come and present a different Jesus and a different gospel, you bear with them, even though you know that when it comes to knowledge of God, I’m not inferior to them.

(7) Think about the differences. Did I wrong you by not taking any support from you when I preached Jesus to you? Remember that whenever I needed anything, other churches, that is, the Macedonian churches, provided it. That is my boast, that I have not burdened you, and no one in your neck of the woods will deprive me of it. And why? To undercut those who pretend to be true apostles by belittling us and taking advantage of you.  
  
(13) Such are not true apostles of Jesus, but false apostles masquerading as true. This should not surprise us. Since Satan himself mas-querades as an angel of light, his deceitful workers pretend to be servants of righteousness. They will receive their just reward.

The Challenge: Can we discern the true gospel from a counterfeit?  
                    Memory Verse: John 3:36

The true gospel centers around Jesus as the only way to God.  
A false gospel presents alternative paths and other “Christs.”

The true gospel centers upon Jesus’ atoning death for sinners.  
A false gospel focuses upon earning our way to heaven.

The true gospel grows out of God’s prophetic revelation in the Bible.  
A false gospel will point to any number of “authorities.”

The true gospel is sacrificial and humble, and loving even to enemies.  
A false gospel is a means to gain advantage, power, and wealth.