

**"THE CAGE OF ASSUMPTIONS"**

I Corinthians 1:18-31

Today we are in part three of our 6-part series where we are seeking to chase, what the 5<sup>th</sup> century Celtic Christians- those Christians over in Britain, Ireland and Scotland, called the Holy Spirit. But in their Gaelic tongue it came out *An Geadh-Glas* or Wild Goose. Our first Sunday we talked about breaking out of the Cage of Responsibility and last Sunday we talked about breaking out of the Cage of Routine. This morning we want to address the Cage of Assumptions.

A question- have any of you ever heard of "The Swoon or Resuscitation Theory?" It all revolves around the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This theory says that Jesus did not really die, He only swooned, therefore the disciples saw only a revived or resuscitated Christ. The theory suggests that Christ was nailed to a cross and suffered from shock, pain and loss of blood. But instead of actually dying, He only fainted (swooned) from exhaustion.

When He was placed in the tomb, He was still alive and the disciples, mistaking Him for dead, buried Him alive. After several hours, He revived in the coolness of the tomb, arose, and departed. Some people go beyond this theory to claim that Jesus visited His disciples and then went to Kashmir to preach to the "Lost Tribes of Israel" with His mother, Mary. They also claimed that Jesus died in Kashmir and is buried there. Now this theory was made popular by Ahmadiya Muslims as the Quran states that Christ did not die on the cross, although it was introduced by Karl Friedrich Bahrdt, who lived from 1741-1792 and Karl Venturini, who lived from 1768-1849 and others.

The point I want to make is that those who ascribed to the Soon Theory did not have a mind for the supernatural and what they did was, when something doesn't mesh with our preexisting cognitive categories, explain away that which we cannot explain. Not one to embrace the mystery, we want to use human explanations for that which is a

supernatural phenomena. As the writer of the book we are studying as a part of this series, Mark Batterson says, [quote] "Instead of living in wonderment, we try to make the Omniscient One [God] fit within the logical limits of our left brain. That doesn't make us smart; it makes us small-minded. And it proves that we live in the cage of assumptions about God. Assumptions take all the mystery and majesty out of life. But God challenges what we assume to be true. He wants us to break out of the cage of assumptions." [end quote]

This morning we want to look at a portion of scripture that can help us break out of the cage of assumptions. But before we jump right in I want to point something out to you. There is one word that our passage uses 6, count them 6 times, even though it might be a variation of this word; maybe you picked it up, and that word is what? That word is foolish. So let's break out of the Cage of Assumptions as we look at our passage from I Corinthians.

The first point I want to make is **God is larger than "The Box"**. (vs. 18-21) I don't know about you but there have been those times in my life when I have consciously or subconsciously tried to determine what God can or cannot do, and, in the process, I boxed God in. Have any of you ever done this? I might say something like, "God could never do that" or "why would God even consider such-and-such" or "that's too small of a thing for God to be concerned with," as if somehow, I can determine what God can or cannot do. And then I have to get into God's Word, the Bible, and re-read Isaiah 55:8-9 where it says, "For my [now this is God speaking, my] thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord." But when you and I are spiritually on target and tracking with God then our faith does seem foolish to the person who doesn't believe. I mean, have you ever been in discussion with a person who doesn't know God, who doesn't know Christ and you begin to talk "spiritual things" and they look at you like you are a Martian from Mars? Do you know what I am talking about? Look

over to I Corinthians 2:14 where we read this about the non-believer, "Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." To the unbeliever the things of Christ don't make sense.

Try this one out- **God is not meant to be "figured out" as if God were some sort of a math problem, but rather God is meant to be experienced.** That is why that passage from Isaiah 55:8-9 is so crucial.

Now I am not saying check your brain at the door when it comes to the Christian faith and seeking to understand and learn about the God of all creation, but what I am saying is we need to experience this one God who created us and desperately wants to be in a personal relationship with us, through His son that He sent to this earth, Jesus Christ.

The second point I want to make is that **God is bigger than intellect.** (vs. 22-25)

We read in verses 22-25 that the preaching of this crucified Christ is a stumbling block to the Jews and is foolishness to the Gentiles. And, it says, that God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. Now remember I said for us not to check our brains at the door when it comes to the Christian faith and learning about the God of all creation. But the point I want to make is that, believe it or not, intellect can actually hinder a person in their relationship with God. There is this thing called faith and I think that Hebrews 11:1 really says it best when we are talking about faith. For it reads, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." Sometimes, when it comes to God, we try and analyze, prove, dissect, pull apart, rationalize. And yet God is God and we are not and folks, if you haven't already experienced it you will- God doesn't stop working in surprising ways for His own glory. That is what could be called a miracle. A miracle.

There is this thing called MYSTERY when it comes to God and when we make room for the Mystery of God we can be drawn into a greater depth when it comes to our worship of God and our understanding of God.

Speaking of Mystery- I read a story about a fellow who was raised in the back hills of West Virginia- I mean, so far out in the sticks, never in his life had he seen the big city, to say nothing of modern inventions and neon lights. He married a girl just like himself and they spent all their married years in the backwoods. They had one son, whom they creatively named Junior. Around the time Junior reached his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, his dad began to realize it wouldn't be too many years before their son would become a man and would strike out on his own. It troubled him that his boy could reach manhood and wind up getting a job in the city, not prepared to face the real world. He felt responsible and decided to do something about it. He and his wife started saving for a trip the 3 of them would take to the city. About 3 years later the big day arrived.

They tossed their belongings in the ol' pickup and started the long journey over winding, rough roads to the city. Their plan was to spend several days at a swanky hotel and take in all the sights. As they approached the outskirts of the metropolis, Papa began to get a little jumpy: "Mama, when we pull up at th' hotel, you stay in th' truck while Junior an' I go in an' look around. We'll come back and git ya, OK? She agreed. Flashing neon lights and uniformed doormen greeted them as they pulled up. Mama stayed put as Papa and Junior walked wide-eyed into the lobby. Neither could believe his eyes! When they stepped on a mat, the doors opened automatically. Inside, they stood like statues, staring at the first chandelier either of them had ever seen. It hung from a ceiling 3 stories high. Off to the left was an enormous waterfall, rippling over inlaid stones and rocks. "Junior, look!" Papa was pointing toward a long mall where busy shoppers were going in and out of beautiful stores. "Papa, look there!" Down below was an ice-skating rink- inside.

While both stood silent, watching one breathtaking sight after another, they kept hearing a clicking sound behind them. Finally, Papa turned around and saw this amazing little room with doors that slid open from the center.

“What in the world?” People would walk up, push a button and wait. Lights would flicker above the doors and then, “click,” the doors would slide open from the middle. Some people would walk out of the little room and others would walk inside and turn around as, “Click,” the doors slid shut. By now, dad and his son stood totally transfixed. At that moment a wrinkled old lady shuffled up to the doors all by herself. She pushed the button and waited only a few seconds. “Click,” two doors opened with a swish and she hobbled into that little room. Not more than 20 seconds later the doors opened again- there stood this fabulously attractive blond, a young woman in her 20’s- high heels, shapely body, beautiful face—a real knockout! As she stepped out, smiled, and turned to walk away, Papa nudged his boy and mumbled, “Hey, Junior... go git Mama!”

Friends, God is like that elevator- He is a mystery, and He never ceases to work in surprising ways. Sometimes we can intellectualize the faith and God to death and we come away empty handed.

And third, **God is bigger than pride**. (vs. 26-31) If we are going to be serious about the mystery of the Christian faith then we need to come to God in all humility. Verse 27 of our passage says, "But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong."

Let me ask you something- do you have this Christian faith all figured out? If you do I want to move in with you because you are the only one that I know on the face of this earth who has and who does. I mean, the person who says they have it all worked out, the person who says they have all the answers and has figured it all out, doesn't. They are only fooling themselves. I think our passage is telling us that only the humble are able

to truly experience the wonderment of God. And for those who got it all together, well the source of their assumption is a 5 letter word called PRIDE.

I picked up a great illustration from the book we are reading that I want to share with you. How many of you know Latin? There is a **Latin** phrase that maybe you know the translation- **the phrase is *terra incognita*** does anyone know the translation? It means **unknown land**.

On the edge of old, medieval maps, cartographers would write this Latin phrase. Many who were many of the learned people of the day, and some of the skeptics said that if you sailed too far into the unknown territory, you might either fall off the edge of the flat earth or come face-to-face with two-headed dragons. And yet there were those who went right ahead and ventured out into the uncharted waters.

Think about Christopher Columbus- he traveled westward on his way to the Indies, a trip many said was not possible. But Columbus was willing to challenge that assumption and begin a Wild Goose chase.

Now even though Columbus was not a perfect person, he knew that it wasn't his smarts or mathematics or his maps that gave him a successful voyage.

He was wise enough to know that it was the Holy Spirit who lead him for he said, [quote] "It was the Lord who put it into my mind, (I could feel His hand upon me), the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to the Indies.

All who heard of my project rejected it with laughter, ridiculing me. There is no question that the inspiration was from the Holy Spirit, because He comforted me with rays of marvelous inspiration from the Holy Spirit." [end quote]

Friends, the Wild Goose, the Holy Spirit, is always encouraging us to go into the terra incognita- the unknown land.

Folks, we all make way too many assumptions about what God can and cannot do; about what is and is not possible in the physical and spiritual realms. And those very assumptions can act like a ceiling that restricts our lives and even our relationship with the Wild Goose- the Holy Spirit.

Do you think the smartest people in the world are the ones who know the most? I don't think so. As a matter of fact the smartest people are the ones who know that they don't know it all. Or to bring it home- the smartest people are those who make the fewest assumptions. If we are willing to chase the Wild Goose we will become aware of the mysterious and phenomenal nature of Almighty God. And God's Word, again and again is proof where all assumptions are broken. Break out of the cage of Assumptions. Break out. Amen.

## "THE CAGE OF ASSUMPTIONS"

I Corinthians 1:18-31

Introduction: Have you ever heard of the "Swoon or Resuscitation Theory"?  
Those who ascribed to this theory did not have a mind for the supernatural and explained away that which cannot be explained

I Corinthians 1:18-31 uses one word or a variation of it 6 times- \_\_\_\_\_

Three points:

First, **God is larger than "The \_\_\_\_\_"** (vs. 18-21)

What God can or cannot do

Isaiah 55:8-9; I Corinthians 2:14

God is not meant to be "figured out" as if He were some sort of math problem, but rather God is meant to be \_\_\_\_\_

Second, **God is bigger than \_\_\_\_\_** (vs. 22-25)

Hebrews 11:1- "Now faith is the assurance of things \_\_\_\_\_ for, the conviction of things not \_\_\_\_\_."

A MIRACLE; A MYSTERY

Third, **God is bigger than \_\_\_\_\_** (vs. 26-31)

Do you have this Christian faith all figured out?

The Latin phrase, *terra incognita* means- \_\_\_\_\_

Conclusion: we make way too many assumptions about what God can and cannot do.... And those assumptions can act like a ceiling that restricts our lives and even the relationship with the Wild Goose- the Holy Spirit. Break out of the cage of Assumptions. Break out.