

## Uncommon Simplicity

“Common sense.” I don’t know why it’s called “common sense.” There’s **nothing** common about it. The simple, practical wisdom that we call “common sense” is not common to all men, or even to a simple majority of people. In fact, if you spend any amount of time interacting with people, you will see that **common sense is actually quite rare**. Lots of people claim to have it, and yet very few people actually possess it or use it.

The reason I begin this way is because, believe it or not, common sense is **foundational** to the faith and mission and ministry. It’s true. But...we do need to be clear that we’re **not** referring to worldly, material common sense; the common sense that says “*don’t put hot coffee between your legs and drive down a bumpy road.*” We’re not even referring to the sense and sensibilities that are truly common to **all** sinful men ever borne of Adam. That’s something entirely different in itself. That’s a sinful common sense that we’re all conceived with and born with. No one has ever had to be taught to lie. No one has ever had to be taught to be selfish. It comes quite **naturally**. It’s common to all men. It’s common sense of the worst sort.

No...the common sense I refer to here when speaking of faith and mission and ministry is the sense and sensibilities that are common to **all the faithful, humble followers of Christ**. What does it mean to be a Christian? In a nutshell, to be a Christian is to be a follower of Christ. Jesus is the leader, and we are His followers. **He leads; we follow**. Simple enough, right? Common sense says so. And yet...how often this sanctified common sense is so very uncommon, **even among the faithful**. Case in point: Consider this morning’s lesson from Acts. Before we do that, maybe we should consider and remember the words that Jesus spoke to these same apostles on Easter Sunday as He stood in their midst and showed them His wounds; showing them the wounds and scars and receipts of their total and complete salvation. St. Luke tells us at the end of chapter 24 of his Gospel that Jesus, standing in their midst, “*opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, saying to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all nations.’*” That’s it. Pretty simple and straight-forward, right?

Consider, also, the parting words of Jesus that He spoke to these same apostles atop that ascension mount, forty days after the resurrection and ten days before Pentecost. “*Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have*

*commanded you.*” Again, that’s it. Make disciples; grow the Church...how? ***Baptism and letting Christ do the teaching.*** Teach His Word. Let Him do the talking. Don’t give your opinions or conjectures. Jesus doesn’t command that you talk about your feelings or try to do some lame pop-psychology. Don’t try to entertain or “bait and switch” people into joining your country club. This isn’t about tax deductions or bake sales or cool architecture or big screen projection and live bands or aerobics classes that get you sweating to the hymnody. Nope. Make disciples by baptizing into Christ and teaching all that Christ has taught and commanded. ***“Where the Word is rightly taught and the sacraments are rightly administered.”***

In both of these instances—Easter Sunday and Ascension—Jesus Himself makes very clear what the faith of the Christian is founded upon—Christ. In both of these instances, Jesus Himself makes very clear what all faithful mission and evangelism and “church” is all about—***Himself and His Word and His sacraments.*** The account of Pentecost, which Luke records for us in Acts, shows so clearly and plainly how these apostles practiced ***faithful, God-given common sense.*** By and through the working of the Holy Spirit, they were emboldened to open their mouths and speak the plain Truth of Christ crucified and resurrected for the sins of the entire world. They were emboldened to stand before all kinds of strangers and proclaim the Truth of sin, the necessity of repentance, and the blessed assurance and peace of the Gospel, just as their Lord Christ had commanded them to do. Peter declares, *“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”* Now when they [the huge crowd of strangers] heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, *“Brothers, what shall we do?”* And Peter said to them, *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to Himself.”*

So...I’ll ask again: What does it mean to be a Christian? A Christian is a follower of Christ. ***Simple enough. Common sense, right?*** Peter and the rest of the apostles showed forth this faithful, sanctified common sense. They spoke Christ’s Truth. They spoke the words God gave them. They called sin “sin.” They called to repentance all who would hear. They pointed all in need of ***salvation, forgiveness, and peace*** to the Word of Christ and to His real and tangible grace so freely given in the waters of Holy Baptism. *“This promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off...everyone whom the Lord calls to Himself,”* everyone whom the Lord loved enough to die and rise again for. It’s all so simple, right? The Word rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered.

And yet...how often is this faithful common sense *so very uncommon?* How often do we, with the best intentions, strive to reproduce Pentecost results, and yet we do everything **BUT** the one simple thing that Christ calls us to do, and which the apostles so unashamedly and boldly did—let Christ do the talking? This God-given miracle of “speaking in foreign tongues/languages,” given to the apostles so that they could simply proclaim the Law and Gospel of Christ in the particular language that the particular hearer could simply understand, is so often turned into something God never intended it to be. *So often Pentecost Sunday is turned into some revivalistic mission extravaganza aimed at “winning souls for Jesus.”* All the stops get pulled out. It’s a party. And yet...the Word is not rightly taught, and the sacraments are not rightly administered, if they’re administered at all. This is when the old adage about common sense and deodorant comes to mind, common sense being just like deodorant in the fact that those who need it the most are often the same one who don’t use it.

Guys: This is what it’s all about. This is what “Church” is all about. This is what evangelism and mission and worship is all about. This is what being a follower of Jesus is all about, not just on Pentecost Sunday, *but every day, every moment, every opportunity.* “*For Jews demand signs/miracles and Greeks seek wisdom...*,” and we seek entertainment and a self-serving sense of purpose and a “warm and fuzzy” feeling that tells us we’re so special and good; we seek tax deductions and *credit for the good deeds we do*, and the glory and praise of fellow sinners, and everything else that rust and moth destroys; everything else that, like chaff on the threshing floor, is blown away or swept up and tossed into the fire because it’s not good for anything else—**it doesn’t save you.**

But...we followers of Christ are *different*. We’re a rare breed. We’re counter-cultural and uncommon. We Christians—we followers of Christ Jesus—humbly, faithfully, and obediently follow His lead. We take up our crosses and we follow Him, trusting that He is working all things for our good and for the good of all those who love Him. We let Him do the talking. We do take the lead, not in front of Christ, *but leading others to Christ.* We lead and point and direct others to the sole fount and source of a grace, mercy, and peace that surpasses all human understanding. We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews, folly to Gentiles, and not very wise or productive or flashy or fun to the common masses. The common sense of the world says that this [the crucifix; the message of Christ crucified] is a *terrible business model. This won’t work. This won’t get you the results you’re hoping for.* But to those who called..., Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

It’s so easy, even a child understands it. May you understand and rejoice and give thanks for and ever hold fast to the simplicity of Christ crucified and

resurrected for you. May this simple, yet powerful message—this gift of God’s wrath against sin and unconditional love for you and for all the common masses—Christ crucified—be your joy, your confidence, and your peace all your remaining days and into all eternity.

In His most holy and precious name...AMEN