

Second Hand Preacher

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 29, 2017

1 Corinthians 1:26-31

I remember being a freshman in college at the University of Minnesota at Waseca. It was an agricultural junior college. We were at a gathering in the auditorium for a freshman introductory course. The instructor pointed out that most of us were not the best and brightest of our high school classes. Even though we were perhaps not the best students, we had the opportunity to work hard and achieve academically so that we could find a job in agriculture. I remember having a bit of a chip on my shoulder and wanting to work hard so I could get better grades than I did in high school. I did well, but I didn't boast because I knew there would be much competition in the outside world. I knew from my faith that I had to be grateful to God for all I had been given.

St. Paul wanted to make sure the Corinthians stayed humble. For Jesus was humble and the whole way of faith that Jesus put forward was one of service rather than worldly greatness. Paul wants to remind the Christians in Corinth that they may be seen as poor in this world, but they are made great because of Jesus. Their power is not their own, but comes from our Lord Jesus Christ. So any boasting should be done in the Lord.

In this individualized culture, many people want to boast in themselves. One can be successful in this world, but to be a person of faith is to know the origin of that success. If we realize all of our gifts come from God. Hans Urs von Balthasar once said, "What you are is God's gift to you. What you become is your gift to God." For me this quote shows the source of our gift and that God wants us to excel so that we can be a gift to the world and to God who loves us with an unconditional love. So we are to make a mark on this world, but we are to know our source is the one who makes all things new.