

Foolish Saving Faith

Easter Sunday and April Fools' Day on the same day: I guess it's only fitting. The world has *always* thought of Christians as foolish. This dates all the way back to the time when guys like St. Peter and St. Paul were still working hard to spread the Gospel. It's nothing new. People have *always* thought we Christians were a bunch of fools. After all, we believe that Jesus Christ, though He was crucified, died, and was buried, *rose from the dead*. More than that, we believe that we're baptized into this reality. His resurrection will be our resurrection; a resurrection to eternal life with Him in Paradise. We Christians believe in and celebrate something that just doesn't happen in everyday life. People just don't rise from the dead, do they?

In fact, that's one of the arguments that many self-professed "wise" people often use in an attempt to slander and discredit the faith. Statistically-speaking, the probability of a dead person rising to life is *next to nil*. *It's astronomically improbable. Just look at the data over the centuries, right?* No one is rising from the dead, so to embrace and believe in the resurrection is to embrace and believe in error. To embrace and believe in the resurrection means that you **reject science**. Never mind the fact that history tells us (speaking through Scripture) that some folks have indeed risen from the dead (e.g., the widow's son, Jairus' daughter, Lazarus, and Jesus). *Statistically, that is a very low population, and yet...it's all absolutely true*. We believe this truth, not because of the odds or the probabilities, but because of the testimony of the eye-witnesses. St. Paul tells us that the resurrected Jesus appeared to the apostles, to over five hundred other faithful disciples (many of whom were still alive at the time of Paul's writing), and to Paul himself. More importantly, we believe this to be true *because of the testimony of the One who tells us*. God says it is so, and so it is.

Still, for most "wise" people (i.e., the ones who reject such resurrection foolishness), today is nothing more than a grand celebration of *the greatest April Fools' prank ever*. If you ask them, they've got it all figured out. Somebody paid off a couple of morally-relaxed Roman guards and stole the body and then told everyone that the tomb is empty because Jesus rose again. And the rest, as they say, is history. Two-thousand years later and we fools still rejoice over such "foolishness."

Now, I know that everyone here is probably feeling kind of *proud* right now. We Christians bear the name of "fool" with *great pride*. To be called foolish for believing in Jesus Christ risen from the dead doesn't bother me at all. I've been called much worse, and for good reason. If this is what makes me a fool, *then I'm a fool. Praise God!*

And yet...we need to be careful here to remember the perspective of this foolishness. ***In whose eyes are we foolish?*** Keep in mind: God calls people foolish a number of times throughout Scripture, and it's *never* something to be proud of. **In fact, if God calls you foolish, you've got problems** (e.g., the foolish man who builds his house on the sand, the five foolish virgins who have no oil in their lamps when the Bridegroom arrives). Being foolish in God's eyes is *not* good. Simply put, to be foolish in God's eyes is to be ***foolish in unbelief***.

Of course, we know that this doesn't include any of us, does it? ***Well...I wouldn't be so quick to boast.*** There's a reason Jesus had to die on that cross, and that reason is sin—your sin, my sin, and the sins of every single person ever descended from Adam. Our first parents foolishly disobeyed God in their vain attempt to be like Him, ***and it's been all foolishness and death and sin ever since.*** Error begets error. Fool begets fool. Sin begets sin. I know this may be difficult for some of you to believe, but even “good” Christians can be ***faithless fools*** sometimes. Just consider the likes of St. Peter and his ***utter lack of trust in God.*** In an attempt to save himself, he denied even knowing Jesus three times, even going so far as to call curses upon himself if he was lying. Not exactly in keeping with Christ's command to not fear those who can only destroy the body, but rather fear the One who has authority to destroy body and soul in hell, is it? **Trust in God above all things.** Sadly, though, when the going gets tough, Peter doesn't trust in God above all things. He even goes so far as to deny knowing God. ***That's pretty foolish, wouldn't you agree?***

Look at the women in our Gospel lesson for today. They had been with Jesus for a long time. How many times over the course of three years did they hear Jesus say that He would suffer and die, but rise again on the third day? You would think something as crazy as that would've stuck in their minds, especially given the fact that they just witnessed the ***dying part of that prophecy*** come true three days earlier. And yet, here they are on the third day, not going out to greet the resurrected Christ in joyous faith, but going out under the cover of pre-dawn darkness ***to anoint His corpse.*** And even when they do encounter a very-much alive Jesus face-to-face, they don't recognize Him. They **assume** that He must be the gardener/caretaker. After all, who else would He be? Jesus is dead. “*Sir, where have you taken His body?*” You can hear the “disbelief” in the angel's voice when he greets them at the tomb. “*Why do you seek the living among the dead? He's risen...just like He told you He would.*” ***Fools...and not in a good way.***

Jesus Himself will call the two men journeying to Emmaus on that first Easter Sunday a couple of fools. Why? Because they didn't believe in Christ's resurrection, ***even after the women had told them.*** “*You foolish ones, slow of*

heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into His glory?" Jesus then, beginning with Genesis and the first books of the Old Testament, goes on to explain to them "all the Scriptures concerning Himself." And still they didn't get it. Do you know when they finally were able to recognize Jesus? Do you know when it all finally clicked? When Christ took bread, blessed it, and gave it to them to eat. *Hmm...sounds a lot like something we'll do today, doesn't it?*

And that brings up a good point. Christians today are no different or any less foolish than those who came before us. How many Christians today will celebrate a Jesus who's risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, but who also cannot possibly feed His children with His own body and blood because that's just physically impossible? How many Christians refuse to recognize Christ in the very thing He bids us to eat? *That's pretty foolish, wouldn't you agree?* What about what God so **clearly** says about matters such as women's ordination or homosexuality or promiscuity and sex outside of marriage? *We often think we're smarter than God, don't we?* Did you know that over 46% of LCMS Lutherans don't have a problem with abortion? 46% of LCMS Lutherans find a way to justify abortion and still consider themselves good and faithful Christians! I'm pretty sure God has had a **lot** to say about this, and yet almost half remain utterly foolish, and the other half remains quiet because they don't want to be thought of as "political." **Fools!** Closer to home: We've all attempted to justify ourselves and our sins, in spite of what God has to say about them. "God, you just don't understand. Normally this would be a sin, but it's different in my case." Folks: God has **never** asked you to justify your sins. He only calls you to **repent** of them; to 'fess up to them; to turn from them, and turn and hold fast to Him. But...so often we don't. For whatever reason, we don't. *How dreadfully foolish!*

But here's the thing: Harping on all the sinful foolishness isn't going to make anyone wise to salvation. **Only God can make us wise to salvation**, and He promises to do just that in the preaching of His holy Gospel and the administration of His holy sacraments. Jesus Himself declares that Gospel to the room full of fools who were hiding behind locked doors on that first Easter Sunday, "peace." He holds out His hands, shows them the wounds of His crucifixion, and declares again, "peace." **The wisdom of Christ's peace is found only in Christ!**

My fellow fools: Your resurrected Lord **continues** to hold out these same blessed, pierced hands to you in your midst as He baptizes you into His victorious death and resurrection; as He absolves you of all your sin; as He feeds you with His own victorious Body and Blood. "I am with you always. Take and eat. Take and drink. This is My Body and My Blood, given and shed for you for the forgiveness of your sin; for the peace that surpasses all understanding." Saving faith, which is a gift of God, hears this divine testimony and believes. Saving faith

hears this divine testimony, *as foolish as it may sound to the ears of Adam*, and rejoices, for this is the Word of Life; the very testimony and promise of the Word made flesh.

I know this all sounds like foolishness to most people, maybe even some of you here today, but to the ears of those made wise by God, this is life! This is peace; true peace that does surpass all human understanding and wisdom. “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*” The foolishness of Christ is the wisdom of salvation. May this ***blessed, life-giving foolishness***; the foolishness of the resurrected and victorious Christ, be your joy, your peace, your wisdom and your confidence all your remaining days and into all eternity.

A very blessed and happy Easter, my fellow fools in Christ!

AMEN