

"Foolish"

Luke 22:14-29

April 1, 2007

Because of the joyous nature of the Palm Sunday celebration - with the beauty of the music shared by our kids and the beginning of Holy Week, I decided that there would be no sermon today. Ya, right! April Fools!!!

Isn't this 'April Fools' stuff an amazing thing. There are some folks for whom an opportunity to pull pranks on their friends is just a little to much fun. And the more gullible those on the receiving end of the pranks are, the better.

When I tried to do some research on April Fools Day, I learned that it has been around for a long, long time and that the real history behind this day is uncertain. There are a number of different beliefs as to its origin. Personally, I like the one that suggests that there was an atheist who was complaining about the fact that there were all kinds of holidays that were related to Christianity and the Church but none that were created for non-believers. To which someone said that he was wrong - that one holiday had been created specially for non-believers - April 1st. I like it because it is the reverse of what I often hear about the foolishness of Christianity. But more seriously, it seems as though the possibility that seems to be most widely accepted takes us back to 1582 in France. Prior to that year, the new year was celebrated for eight days, beginning on March 25. The celebration culminated on April 1 [which was, according to the calendar of the day, New Years Day]. With the reform of the calendar under Charles IX, the Gregorian Calendar was introduced, and New Year's Day was moved to January 1.

However, communications being what they were in the days when news traveled by foot, many people did not receive the news for several years. Others, the more obstinate crowd, refused to accept the new calendar and continued to celebrate the new year on April 1. These backward folk were labeled as "fools" by the general populace. They were subject to some ridicule, and were often sent on "fools errands" or were made the butt of other practical jokes.

It is a tough thing to be faced with any great change happening in our world and not knowing about it at all or if you do hear about it, wondering if we should believe that the change is true or stick with what we have always believed.

Go out and stand beside the road some day and imagine having been standing beside the road from the Mount of Olives that ran down to the

gate into the city of Jerusalem. Imagine seeing people coming down that road and shouting about the arrival of a messiah that the nation had only been waiting for for hundreds of years. Do you believe it or not? Imagine watching that same man being led to Calvary at the end of that same week carrying a cross on which He would be crucified. Would you continue to believe that He was the long awaited messiah? Then think about the fact that people have been telling this same story of 2000 years and talking about a savior of the world having arrived for that whole time - do you still believe? Or do you say that believing that such a thing is just a fools tale? I imagine people more than 400 years ago saying - 'What do you mean they changed the calender? New Years Day has always been on April 1st - no one is going to come along and change it to January 1st.' So who is the fool?

In the coming week we will retell the heart of that story that shapes the Christian faith. We will gather on Thursday evening and tell of a God who rescued a nation from slavery in Egypt. We will tell of ten plagues that God sent to break down overwhelming power of Egypt and the miraculous events that allowed the Israelites to cross the Red Sea on dry land and endure the harshness of a wilderness for 40 years before arriving in the promised land. On Friday we will walk through the story of Jesus' last week between the waving palm branches and the stone rolled over the entrance to the tomb in which the crucified Jesus would be laid. It is an incredible story and many would say that you are a fool to believe it - - - others would say you are a fool not to!

Today we will offer bread and wine to you in the same way that Jesus offered bread and wine to His disciples at that last supper. [We bring a precious child to the font and pour a bit of water on her head and say that God washes her clean and claims her as His beloved child] Are you a fool to take and eat Are we foolish to imagine that this washing is any more important than a bath at home with Johnson's Baby Shampoo are we fools to believe?

Many in our world will be quick to say that believing such a thing is only for fools. They may laugh at people who would bow before an unseen God and reverently received an unleavened bread wafer and a sip of wine. In many ways it is understandable - just talking about such things sound a bit funny to my intellectual, very human ears. Yet, as foolish as it can sound, I find the thought of a world without God even more unbelievable and purposeless. Such a world would be a world dominated by the whims of people like the Pharisees of Jesus day who's concern for life lived their way was all that matters - such a world would be a world dominated by those who could exercise that greatest power and dominate by force. Such a world would have no destination beyond the feeding of our own desires.

To me that is not the world that I want to be a part of. I am drawn to a world that that did not just come into existence by chance, a world where the creator God is a God of such love that He would do everything possible for the creation, a world where the one who serves is held in honor, a world where grace, forgiveness and love come down from our God and flow from person to person. A world where I am reminded that because of the actions of our God, Jesus can come to me and say, "I confer upon you a kingdom because you have stood by me through all of the trials."

I think of the Apostle Paul writing to the church in Corinth, "**But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.**" -- *1 Cor 1:27*

What do you think is foolish? What do you believe?

AMEN