

1Corinthians 1:18, 25-29

For the messages about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 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; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God.

Luke 24: 13-35

Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning with us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Sermon

Foolishness... Foolishness of silly hats and funny costumes. Foolishness of bad jokes and dancing. Foolishness of a cross, a symbol of death, becoming the place where God begins new life. It is all foolishness, and it is all the wisdom of God.

On that same day, after the women had already returned from the tomb. After the disciples had verified the story. Two of Jesus' disciples were walking to Emmaus. They were talking about Jesus and everything that had just happened and lo and behold, Jesus joins them - incognito - they don't recognize him. Maybe he had on a fake mustache and dark glasses, I don't know, but they didn't know it was him. And Jesus goes along with it. "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?" There were no personal pronouns, no declarations of identity. Only a breakdown of scripture that helped explain why everything happened the way it did.

The second foolishness was in the house. After what must have been hours of walking and talking, these two so called disciples never recognize Jesus. It is not until they sit to eat. In the blessing and breaking of bread they finally see Jesus, and then he disappears. Did Jesus' take off his hat and glasses? Did he loosen his robe and the disciples saw a bit of his super suit peaking out, with a big J right in the middle of it? What about the breaking of bread gave Jesus away? Had he perfected the perfect tear, the iconic holding of the bread in both hands? What was it? And why then, once they finally figured out who he was, did he disappear from them. Did Moses bet Jesus that he couldn't go the whole day without be recognized? I don't know.

And then there is the foolishness of the disciples. They had just told Jesus that he needed to stay with him, it was not safe to continue journeying in the darkness of night. Yet immediately after Jesus appears, these two disciples get up and make the seven mile journey back to Jerusalem. The stumble through the darkness and danger of the night just to go back to where they just were. Foolishness.

Yet what seems foolishness to us, is wisdom for God. The truth is, Jesus joins us on our journey of life. Before we can recognize him, before we can have faith in him, before we can claim him as our risen Lord, Jesus walks with us. And maybe, just maybe, that moment of recognition, that moment that we see Jesus in our life and recognize his teachings and wisdom, maybe that is the moment where he disappears. Not in the way of being gone and distant, but in the way that we no longer need Jesus to carry us along. And when that moment comes, when we recognize for ourselves the truth of resurrection, the truth of God's love for us, the truth of grace and mercy and new life. Maybe that is the moment that all our fears are set aside and we must run through the darkness so that we can share the light of Christ with others.

Oh, God is foolish. He foolishly calls to us today to be his disciples and to share his light in the world. Yet his foolishness is wiser than the smartest among us. With joy, and a bit of foolishness, with a smile and a laugh, may we share God's good news with the world around us.

Humorous Interlude: The Moment of Belief

An atheist was taking a walk through the woods, admiring all that the "accident of evolution" had created. "What majestic trees! What powerful rivers! What beautiful animals!" he said to himself.

As the atheist was walking alongside the river he heard a rustling in the bushes behind. As he turned to look, the atheist saw a 7-foot grizzly charge toward him. He ran as fast as he could up the path. He looked over his shoulder and saw that the bear was closing in on him. He tried to run even faster, so scared that tears were coming to his eyes. He looked over his shoulder again and the bear was even closer. His heart was pumping frantically as he tried to run even faster, but he tripped and fell on the ground. He rolled over to pick himself up and saw the bear right on top of him raising his paw to kill him. At that instant the atheist cried out, "Oh my God!"

Just then, time stopped. The bear froze. The forest was silent. The river even stopped moving. A bright light shone upon the man. A voice came out of the sky saying, "You denied my existence all these years, taught others I don't exist and even credited my creation to a cosmic accident and now you expect me to help you out of this predicament? Am I to count you as a believer?"

The ever so proud atheist looked into the light and said, "It would be rather hypocritical for me to ask to be a Christian after all these years, but could you make the bear a Christian?"

"Very well," said the voice.

As the light went out, the river ran. The sounds of the forest continued and the bear put his paw down. The bear then brought both paws together, bowed his head and said, "Lord, I thank you for this food that I am about to receive."

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An atheist was spending a quiet day fishing when suddenly his boat was attacked by the Loch Ness monster. In one easy flip, the beast tossed him and his boat high into the air. Then it opened its mouth to swallow both.

As the man sailed head over heels, he cried out, "Oh, my God! Help me!"

At once, the ferocious attack scene froze in place, and as the atheist hung in mid-air, a booming voice came down from the clouds, "I thought you didn't believe in me!"

“Come on God, give me a break!” the man pleaded. “Two minutes ago I didn’t believe in the Loch Ness monster either!”

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God was once approached by a scientist who said, “Listen God, we’ve decided we don’t need you anymore. These days we can clone people, transplant organs and do all sorts of things that used to be considered miraculous.”

God replied, “Don’t need me huh? How about we put your theory to the test. Why don’t we have a competition to see who can make a human being, say, a male human being.”

The scientist agrees, so God declares they should do it like he did in the good old days when he created Adam.

“Fine” says the scientist as he bends down to scoop up a handful of dirt.”

“Whoa!” says God, shaking his head in disapproval. “Not so fast. You get your own dirt.”

Humorous Interlude: Last Wish

An old dying priest sent messages for two of his parishioners to come to his home. One happened to be his IRS agent and the other was his lawyer. When they arrived, they were ushered up to his bedroom. As they entered the room, the priest held out his hands and motioned for them to sit on each side of the bed. The priest grasped their hands, sighed contently, smiled and stared at the ceiling. For a time, no one said anything. Both the IRS agent and the attorney were touched and flattered that the old priest would ask them to be with him during his final moment. They were also puzzled because the priest had never given any indication that he particularly liked either one of them.

Finally the lawyer asked, “Father, why did you ask the two of us to come?”

The old priest mustered up some strength, then said weakly, “Jesus died between two thieves, and that’s how I want to go, too.”