

April Fool's Day

In addition to being Maundy Thursday, today, April 1st, is also April Fools Day, also known as All Fools Day. There are various possible origins of April Fools day. It seems most likely though to be related to the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in the 16th century. That change moved the beginning of the New Year from April 1st to January 1st. Those who did not know about or rejected that change were considered to be and called “fools.”

There was also a medieval festival, held on different days in different places, called the Feast of Fools. On that day children or simple-minded people would be selected to play the roles of Pope, Bishop, etc., while the general population engaged in all sorts of profane revelry. The celebration actually got quite blasphemous and was eventually banned. The Feast of Fools phenomenon, and its reversal of the clergy and the unlettered, is a fascinating commentary on the tension between Christianity and culture.

For me, when I hear the word “fool,” especially during Holy Week, I think of the rock opera Jesus Christ Superstar, which more or less depicts the events of Jesus’ Passion, up to and including his crucifixion. During his interrogation of Jesus, Pontius Pilate sings, “You’re a fool Jesus Christ.” Tonight, the night of Jesus’ betrayal, it is appropriate for us to ask ourselves, “Was Jesus Christ a fool? Is our Holy Communion celebration a kind of Feast of Fools? Are we fools to follow Jesus?”

By the world’s standards Jesus was a fool. Jesus had the power to control the weather, to catch boatloads of fish, and to multiply food, but he never used those powers to make a single thin dime for himself. What a foolish waste! He could have made a fortune. Moreover, Jesus’ teaching was foolish. He taught us to forgive when everybody knows it’s better to get even. He taught us to give generously to others when it’s obviously better

to take care of #1. And he taught us to love unconditionally when we've all learned not to make ourselves vulnerable in that way. Yeah, Jesus, by every earthly standard, was a fool.

Consider the foolishness of the Last Supper that we memorialize tonight. Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Their master and the creator of the universe would have to be pretty foolish to take on the role of the lowest of the low slaves and serve his inferiors that way. And then Jesus tops it all off with a perfectly foolish statement saying that the bread is his body and the wine his blood. Everybody knows bread is just bread and wine is just wine. Jesus had to be foolish to think anyone could, or would want to, eat his flesh and drink his blood.

Jesus ultimate foolishness would come on the day after the night in which he was betrayed, the day of his crucifixion. Jesus, who healed the sick, and even raised dead... Jesus, who entered Jerusalem earlier in the week with the crowds ready to fight for him and make him king... this Jesus allowed himself to be tried and sentenced to death without putting up a fight or even saying a word in his own defense. Utter foolishness! Didn't Jesus know that when you raise your head above the crowd some jealous person will try to lop it off? Didn't Jesus know that when you stand up for what you believe in, for what's right, for God's Word, a mob with less knowledge and courage will try to knock you down? We could have told him that.

So we would have to be fools to follow Jesus, wouldn't we? We'd have to be crazy to accept his teaching. We'd have to go against all the world's science to believe we eat his body and drink his blood when we receive the Eucharistic bread and wine. And if there is anything we don't want to be it's a fool. We pride ourselves on being skeptics, free thinkers, wise, educated, literate, scientific, and worldly. We're nobody's fool and proud of it. So we say. "Follow that Jesus and you'll wind up exactly where he did, on a cross.

Try to love people and they will hate you for it. Serve people and they will take advantage of you. Who needs that? Don't be a fool!"

But who are the real fools today? So many people have been brainwashed into thinking that peace and happiness can be found in sex, drugs, money, politics, false religions and the rest. Aren't they the fools? So many people have never experienced the sheer ecstasy of truly loving another person purely, wholly, completely. Aren't they the fools? Only a total fool has not surrendered himself totally to Jesus and his love, his will.

St. Paul said that the cross looks like foolishness to the world, but to those who are being saved it is the power and wisdom of God. He proclaimed himself to be a fool for Christ, with the implication being that those who will not suspend their worldly wisdom and accept the things of God are truly the foolish. The communists used to call the Westerners that promoted communism "useful idiots." They thought they were smart but they were actually signing their own death warrants. Just like wise but wicked Judas 2,000 years ago, there are a lot of "useful idiots" for Satan promoting the powers of darkness today under the guise of Christianity today and they are too foolish to even see it.

It comes down to this, will you be a fool for Christ, or will you play the fool for some lesser power? Jesus chose to be a holy fool and go to the cross. Will you be that kind of fool? Will you be foolish enough to eat Jesus body and blood under the forms of bread and wine? Will you be foolish enough to believe what the Bible says even when it goes against your cultural biases? Will you be foolish enough to trust a man who put his life on the line and got himself crucified? If you're not willing to be a fool for Christ, to make an absolute fool of yourself for him, you have no part in him. I hope you'll be wise enough to be a fool. Amen.