

Easter Sunday

April 1, 2018

Our Savior's Way
Worshiping Sundays 8:00, 9:30, & 11:00 AM
Pastor Bill Mann

It's Easter! And it's April Fools Day. Do you know that the church is responsible for April Fools Day? Back in 1582 Pope Gregory XIII decided to change the calendar. He moved New Years Day from the end of March to January 1st. But some people missed the message. They started celebrating New Years on April 1st—they were the first “April Fools.”

Over the years there have been some great April Fools Jokes. Here are some of my favorites--back on April 1, 1962--Swedish National TV announced that people could convert their black and white TV sets to color TV. All they had to do was stretch a woman's nylon stocking over the set. Young adults in Sweden still remember their dads running through the house searching for their moms' nylon stockings. On April 1st, 1974 residents of Sitka Alaska awoke to a disturbing site. Plumes of black smoke were rising from an extinct volcano that towers over the city. After a general panic, it was discovered that a bush pilot--Porky Bickar--had spent the past year flying hundreds of old tires up to crater of the volcano. On April Fools Day he lit them on fire in an attempt to convince the residents of Sitka that their extinct volcano had come back to life. When Mt. St. Helens erupted on July 10, 2008 someone actually sent Porky a note saying, “Now you've gone too far.” And do you remember, on April 1st, 1996?--Taco Bell took out full-page ads in a bunch of major newspapers announcing that they had purchased the Liberty Bell. They said they were renaming

it the “Taco Liberty Bell.” Hundreds of outraged citizens called the National Historic Park in Philadelphia to express their anger. When the White House Press Secretary was asked about it, he quipped, “We’ve also sold the Lincoln Memorial--to the Ford Motor Company. From now on it will be called the “Ford Lincoln Mercury Memorial.”

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is no joke. The Son of God was killed. He was buried in a grave. Three days later the grave was empty. In the days that followed Jesus appeared alive—first to Mary Magdalene, then to his disciples in an upper room, and finally to a gathering of more than 500 of his followers. Attempts to prove that Jesus did not rise from the dead, beginning with an investigation by Jewish and Roman authorities in 30 AD, have all failed. Jesus’ followers have not wavered in their belief. The Bible says, “The fact is, Christ has been raised from the dead.” (1 Corinthians 15:20) The first disciples were willing to give their lives for this belief. And today, those who believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead number more than 2.3 billion, by far the largest religious group in the world—making up almost 1/3 of the world’s population. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! Alleluia.

In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul wrote: “We are fools for Christ.” (1 Corinthians 4:10) Here, in the place where we live, we are surrounded by so many different faiths, beliefs, and value systems. It may seem wise to accept other people and affirm their beliefs. Acceptance is good, but the resurrection of Jesus is at the heart of who we are. It may not be popular to believe that Jesus is the one-and-only Savior of the world and many people will think that the good news of a crucified and resurrected Jesus is an archaic idea that makes no sense at all. If you persist in speaking this belief, you may very well end up looking like “a fool for Christ.”

One way to deal with this uncomfortable situation is to downplay or even deny our own beliefs. You see, the beliefs and values of the Christian faith have again become countercultural. But this is not who we are. We cannot keep silent! Justice Anontin Scalia said, “God assumed from the beginning that the wise of the world would view Christians as fools ... and He has not been disappointed ... if I have brought any message today, it is this: Have the courage to have your wisdom regarded as stupidity. Be fools for Christ. And have the courage to suffer the contempt of the sophisticated world.” Don’t try to fit in to the world we live in by giving up what you believe in. People around us may call us foolish, but if we live with integrity, if we are truly a people of grace, if we genuine in our love and sacrificial in our service to others—I believe that many in this world will be drawn to Jesus. Their hearts will be open to the message--that God so loved the world sent his Son to die on a cross for our sins. And to rise from the dead. For Christ is risen. He is risen indeed! Alleluia. It was true 2,000 years ago and it is still true today!

PRAYER: Lord, You came to us and paid the price for our sin. You defeated death and rose again. It is an incredible story and You know that none of us want to be seen as a fool. We want other people to think well of us, to see us as intellectual and cultured. So there are times when we are tempted to soft-pedal the gospel. Forgive us, Lord, for worrying too much about our own image. Help each of us to be a fool for You. Yet, at the same time, give us wisdom. Show us the way to live with grace and love in a world that does not share our values. Give us the words to speak the gospel of the resurrection in a winsome and winning way. Amen.