

Easter Day Sermon
St. John 20:1-18
April 1st, 2018
St. George's Bolton
Fr. Chris

April Foolishness?

I am happy to announce, because it is Easter, there will be no sermon this morning.
April Fools!

Whom do you seek? We seek God. We seek the living God.
Whom do you seek? Sir tell us where he is...
He is not here. His is risen!

God is in the midst of us right now. God is not held captive in a great building of stone, yet such a building impresses upon us the greatness of God, God who is beyond all that we can conceive and wrap our minds around.

So it is that God would come into our world and live among us and love us and teach us to love one another. So it is that God would reveal that God understands what it means and is to be human. Ecce Homo. Behold the man. Ecce ad Deum. Behold your God. Behold the God of the universe humbly serving us by example, by choosing the lowly job of washing the feet of his disciples. Behold God on a cross suffering for us, dying for us to show us the breadth and depth of God's love for each one of us. And here's the clincher: Behold the empty tomb of God. Behold the risen Jesus, the sure sign that God is not dead, not defeated, but victorious and successful in God's mission of love on this earth. God wins. We win. Jesus is victorious, and we share that victory with Him as His beloved people.

At Easter, life triumphs. God is real. God is alive and well. God is undefeated. Death has lost the battle for our souls. Death has not destroyed God; no, God has gone down and destroyed death. Death has lost for once and all and not destroyed God. God lives!

In the words of the Easter hymn [194]

Jesus lives! thy terrors now can no longer, death appall us;
Jesus lives by this we know thou, O grave, canst not enthrall us. Alleluia
Jesus lives! our hearts know well naught from us his love shall sever;
life, nor death, nor powers of hell tear us from his keeping ever. Alleluia
Jesus lives! To him the throne over all the world is given:
may we go where he has gone, rest and reign with him in heaven. Alleluia

To the victor go the spoils, and in this case, that is forgiveness of sin and keys to eternal life with God. And those spoils can be ours this Easter morning as we celebrate and share in the joy of this victory with God.

No tomb can hold Him. The heavy stone by unknown and powerful force is rolled away. No wrappings can bind the body of Jesus to this earth. God could never be bound to the ground. Think about it. And God came to us freely out of love for us and out of a genuine desire to help us.

"Woman, why are you weeping?" asked a stranger who appeared to be a gardener among the stone tombs. Mary did not recognize him. When she heard His voice, she knew. She knew who it was. Every resurrection appearance in the Gospels is described as happening this way. For a while they interact with the risen Jesus first, not realizing whom they are speaking with, and later on they recognize him either by the words he speaks or the gestures he makes.

Why is all this good news for us?

To me this means we have a chance to meet the risen Jesus!

From the moment we left the nursery after we were born, in the hospital, or in my case, the "log cabin," we began to face death and deterioration and destruction and the evil forces that desire to pull us down with them. Yes these are very real.

Our lives are like the metaphor of a new car. The moment you drive it off the lot, it loses some of its "brand new value" and starts to get old. And that mileage, which seems like soooo much in the beginning, piles on quickly, and with the many miles traveled, the vehicle cannot help but age, as invincible as it seems when it is brand new. So too with us. But we don't have to end up on a used people lot or in a junk yard- like the bone-yards populated by some who have gone before us.

Then again, the process is slow for most, and so gradual, that you don't know it's happening and then one day you are there.

The human condition without God is fear, anxiety, and death. With God it is peace and life. I choose peace and life! Let go of the chains that enslave you. Let go of your worry and earthly cares and live. Seek the Peace of Christ which passes all understanding.

We need Easter this year more than ever. We need the real hope and reorientation that it can bring to our lives. Lord knows we are tired of the long winter we have just come through. We are weary of the uncertainty in our lives. We need some

real hope, not the empty promises of advertisers on TV that tell us everything will be alright if we buy their wares. We need some real hope, not the same old tired promises of politicians who too often hold out false hope to us, regardless of their stripe. I for one am tired of it. I need some rest. I need some peace. I need some real hope. I need to rediscover life again. I cannot stand the craziness of this world and this time we live in. I choose the craziness of God which is saner than I can imagine and makes so much sense when you embrace it. Yes, it is April Fool's Day and it is appropriate to consider that many consider us foolish for our faith...As the Apostle Paul observed:

"We are fools for the sake of Christ, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless, and we grow weary from the work of our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we speak kindly. We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things, to this very day." [1 Corinthians 4:10-13] And again in the same letter of St. Paul: [1 Corinthians Chapter 1:20-29] "Where is the one who is wise? ...Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ...We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom 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 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." So there, in the words of St. Paul himself, is the paradox: The wisdom of God is foolishness to the thinking of the world, but life to those who need it. Maybe it is April Fool's day, but are we really foolish? I would rather look foolish to others than to be foolish about my life. I choose the foolishness of God.

The Wisdom of Christianity is a paradox to this world. Take the cross, a sign of hatred and cruelty and oppression, horrible suffering and death, and God has transformed that symbol into one of love, peace, kindness, forgiveness and most importantly: life itself. For Jesus is the fruit of this tree, this is the fruit of which God spoke of in the Garden of Eden, that if you eat thereof, you will be like God

and live forever. We eat this food in a few moments, the fruit of the cross, the body and blood of Jesus Christ. God has taken a day of darkness and death and made it a Good Friday for us, and he has changed it because of Easter Morning and an empty tomb and an empty cross. God has turned our tears of sadness and loss into tears of joy! This is some of the foolishness of God which makes our human folly appear crazy. God has transformed death and defeat into victory.

The whole world is coming alive around us this past week. The green color of life will soon replace the grey barrenness of winter. The snow is melting and is almost gone everywhere. The color of life will soon be reborn. The warmth of life pulsing around us is here again and growing. The dead leaves and the death which the cold frost brought has not conquered. Life continues and thrives. The apparent death is gone and life thrives. We will remove those dead leaves from our gardens. We will collect the dead branches from the trees that have fallen and remove them from the land of the living. Life will continue for now. Get out of the way death, life is coming back. "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." I don't mind being a fool for Christ. I get it. Jesus is risen this Easter morning. Choose the life that God holds forth to you! AMEN