**February 28, 2021**

**A Fool For Christ: Based on 1 Corinthians 1: 18-25 (and Mark 8:31-38)**

Are you a fool for Christ?

in Jesus’ ministry, those who would not consider anything Christ did to be miraculous, thinking we are pretty foolish to believe. Understandably so. “You expect me to believe that Jesus’ touching the eyes of a blind person restored his sight?” “You expect me to believe that touching the robe of Jesus’ gown cured the symptoms of a haemorrhaging woman?” “You expect me to believe that when Jesus prayed over a child on her death bed, that she awoke and lived?” “And really, how can you expect me to even consider that Jesus himself rose from the dead to walk with us again?” “Preposterous, crazy, impossible.” “You are a fool.”

This could, and likely does, lead some to conclude that the God we believe in is a sham. What kind of God would allow his son to be victimized the way that Jesus was? What kind of God would permit Jesus to be humiliated. And of course, the ultimate disgrace, crucifixion. If God is Holy Presence, the source of life itself, and Jesus is Love Incarnate, this entire message, some may say, is unbelievable. The story is “Fake News” a statement we hear much these days. It is unfathomable, baseless, untrue. And perhaps not said to us face to face, many would call us fools to believe any of it.

In this morning’s Epistle reading Louise shared these words from the Apostle Paul, ***“18For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing., “***

I hear this as Paul acknowledging those that choose to turn away from God.

If one is expected to see Jesus as possessing otherworldly powers and that God is the provider, the naysayers have much to argue. One might ask, why was this evident only in annals of history during the Roman Empire? Why is Jesus or someone like him not here today when there is as much or perhaps even more corruption and abuse of power? Why must we wait for Jesus to return? Wait for what and wait for when?

Paul suggests such people are perishing. He is of course not speaking of perishing in the sense of our mortal being, our biological self, but perishing in the sense of not living in hope and joy and not living as God intends.

The cross Jesus bore offers a window of grace. Despite being an image of horror and incredible suffering, the crucifix announces mortality is brief, but love is eternal. According to Paul, those who do not grasp this are perishing. In my world I see this as missed opportunity.

Who do you know that would not benefit from something miraculous in their lives. Perhaps the parents of the child taken away by US border officials during immigration are reunited. Perhaps a son, daughter, grandson or granddaughter is liberated from the abyss of addiction. Perhaps a survivor of Residential School abuse is somehow reconciled into wholeness. Perhaps Michael Spavor and Michael Covrig, now incarcerated in China unlawfully for two years will be released.

To believe in possibility is not foolishness, it is profoundly hopeful. It is as hopeful as Jesus was during his ministry. It is as hopeful as God was then, is now, and will always be, hopeful that humanity will see a way forward despite distractions, despite unhelpful influences, despite what is only good for self.

This is indeed not foolish and will enliven and sustain us rather than cause us to perish. I believe this also speaks to something else Paul offers. He suggests, “***to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”***

I am always cautious about saviour language. In fact, I would admit that I am uncomfortable with statements such as “Jesus Saves!” Frequently, I see those on signs and bumper stickers and wonder just what the individual is hoping to be saved from and how that works. My theological outlook or my “God Talk” if you like, doesn’t allow me to make judgements on who among us is favoured, if that is the intent. If I am not a follower of Jesus, I am no less special, no less human, no less loved and no less cherished by our Creator. I am confident of that.

But in my wondering, I considered saved as opposing perished. Perhaps believing in possibility when unlikely, or maintaining a hopeful spirit in the face of discouragement or disillusionment, is saving. Perhaps waking up, shaking off the cobwebs and embracing the day as one full of promise is saving. Perhaps risking a difficult discussion with a partner, family member or good friend will bring reconciliation, and be saving.

Living the “saving grace” of Jesus might be seen as pretty foolish, because there is ample opportunity for disappointment and even failure. Feelings can be hurt, wounds can be inflicted, relationships damaged. That is a risk we take when we live as “fools for Jesus.”

What does one think about the wisdom of being such a “Holy Fool?,” a term author Richard Rohr uses.

***20 “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age?,”*** asks Paul**. “Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” 21**

One who was wise in Jesus’ time would be considered a priest or scribe, someone of the Holy Order who could proclaim the **word** in God’s name. Jesus would prove them to be fools, sacrificing truth for position, compensation or authority. Jesus, a man with no formal education, no status, no recognition, spoke the words of prophets from his heart. Prophesy was acted in daily ritual; believing led to healing, compassion fostered hope, unconditional love embraced humankind as never before.

However, placing the needs of others before his own was utterly foolish, so very foolish for Jesus. Advocating for the other led to the cross. But this was wisdom and it is not seen or experienced often.

The wisdom Paul speaks to is that which comes from knowing that 5,000 can be fed through a few loaves of bread. It is the kind of wisdom that understands that while the odds of success might be low, there is no option but to try. This is wisdom that shakes off risk and even sacrifice when the needs of our human family and God’s creation are in question. And it is the kind of wisdom that comes from being a fool for Jesus.

God uses the ordinary to hold up this chaotic world we are in. It has been that way for millennia. It was that way is Jesus’ time, when he, a poor carpenter and a few uneducated fishermen set out to change the way society functioned. It was God’s Holy work but it was foolish. The wisdom of that prophetic work carries us onwards today in hope and in prayer that we might be stewards of something equally profound.

Who wants to be a fool for Jesus?

God’s Kin-dom needs fools like us.

Thanks for listening this morning, Amen