



Fools for Christ

Mark 16:1-8; John 20:1-10; Luke 24:1-12

Sunday, April 1, 2018 • Easter Sunday,
First Federated Church of Peoria, Illinois
The Rev. Dr. Forrest Krummel, Jr.

Today is April Fool's Day, beside being Easter. The last time this occurred was in 1956. April Fool's Day is a day of pranks, hoaxes and good natured high-jinks. It's origin can be traced back to Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. If someone was unfamiliar with the Christian faith they may think that the story of Easter is the biggest April Fool's joke ever. Many did when the women came back from the Tomb that first Easter morning. The apostle Paul wrote that the story of Easter is a stumbling block to some and foolishness to others. (I Corinthians 1:23) But this begs the question, "Who is the biggest fool?"

Maybe Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. He could have stopped the crucifixion. By all indications he wanted to. After interrogating Jesus he said, "I find no crime in this man". Besides, Pilate was a busy man and the ridiculous customs of the Jews was of no concern to him. Added to this was the troubling dream that his wife had concerning Jesus. She warned Pilate about getting involved (Matthew 27:19) But did he listen? No. Instead he listened to the crowd. Swayed by the emotional masses he did that which he knew was wrong but he was too weak to stand alone. So, he ceremonially washed his hands and declared that Jesus' blood was not to be on his hands. But history judged differently. The stain of Jesus' blood is on Pilate's hands. His was far from a profile in courage.

Maybe the bigger fool was Annas or his toady son-in-law Caiaphas. Annas was the high priest who loved the Temple and the Institution than he did the one to whom the Temple pointed, God. Caiaphas, on the other hand, feared a Roman backlash and said that it was better for one man to die for the many than for the many to die for one man. What difference does innocence make? Save yourself.

Consider the foolishness of the disciples. Where were they? They scattered like sheep, just as Jesus said that they would. And Peter, the first to see Jesus as the Christ, denied him three times. None of them, save possibly one, was at the Cross. And none of them accompanied the women.

So now I have a riddle for you. When is an ending not an ending? Answer, when the last sentence ends in the middle. That is what Mark's gospel does.

The gospel of Mark is the unsatisfactory gospel because the last sentence literally ends with with the word "for". The women told no one for? "For" what? For they were afraid? Amazed? Beside themselves? What?

One of the most insightful commentators that I referred to noted that neither the Crucifixion nor the Resurrection ends the story of Easter. The story of Easter ends with us, with each one of us. It calls upon us to be foolish enough to take Jesus seriously. We do not know what the Future holds but we do know this, no matter what the Future holds it is the Resurrected Lord in Whose Hands it is held. Christ beckons us into the Future. We may never know where we will see Him, but we will see Him often in unexpected places and at unexpected times. We cannot escape either Him or His claim upon our lives.