

Reading: Luke 24:1-35

Theme: Easter Fools!

On 1st April 1957 the current affairs program Panorama ran an item on the bumper spaghetti harvest in Switzerland and many were taken in by it and were amazed to learn spaghetti grew on trees! As a child and teenager April Fool pranks were mostly fun at home, but at school they were a bit rough. The one I remember the clearest was carried out by my grandparents on my older cousin and myself staying with them at a caravan and we had boiled eggs for breakfast, but couldn't slice the top off as they were as hard as anything – not extremely hard-boiled eggs, but solid sugar eggs – like gobstoppers! April 1st and Easter Sunday do not often coincide – the last time was in 1956, then today and the next time is in 2029, then in 2040 and not until 2108 after that!

Søren Kierkegaard the Danish philosopher and theologian said “*There are two ways to be fooled. One is to believe what isn't true; the other is to refuse to believe what is true.*” Although they did not have April Fool's Day in Jesus' time, we can see many who we could classify as fools in many ways. Let's briefly look at some Easter Fools this morning.

1. Crowd Mentality Fools.

We may call this popular culture fools - as they go with what is being said and not checking it out or thinking things through for themselves. We see this in the Bible

accounts of Palm Sunday and Good Friday. The excitement and expectation as Jesus rode into Jerusalem that He was going to lead them in victory over their Roman oppressors, but a few days later many of the same crowd would have been screaming out '*Crucify Him, crucify Him!*'

I know people like Christmas as it is so cosy and sweet, but few really have time for Easter as it seems so cruel and gruesome and are happy to bury the events of the first Easter weekend under an avalanche of cute bunnies and chicks, flowers, chocolate and a holiday weekend for family and fun.

2. Religious Fools.

The plot to get rid of Jesus was planned and brought about by the religious rulers and hierarchy. These were the ones who knew the Bible of their times – what we would term the OT, knew all God had done for their nation and the promises He had given concerning a Rescuer, a Saviour and they were looking for this One to come – calling Him the Messiah, the Christ. Even though these ones heard Jesus teach, saw the miracles He did, heard Him explain the OT so clearly and live it out perfectly, yet they refused to believe the evidence they saw with their own eyes. They wanted a convenient political Messiah and not this One who made personal demands on their lives and challenged their attitudes and way of life.

Someone here may know much about Jesus and God; all the Bible tells us of God's work in history and all Jesus said and did. You may be religious, but it is a convenient religion and has little impact on your day-by-day living. You expect God and Jesus to be there for you but not to make demands on your life, thoughts, desires and lifestyle – that is too much and uncomfortable. Perhaps you conveniently will plan to or are getting rid of, or have got rid of Jesus from your life! Moving on we see:

3. Mocking Fools.

After Jesus had been betrayed by Judas (*a betraying fool*) we learn that at His trial Jesus was mocked in many ways – by the religious hierarchy, the false 'witnesses' at the illegal trial (*at which it had already determined there would be a guilty sentence*) and especially by the soldiers as they had a helpless prisoner with which they could do what they wanted with and mocked and tormented Him with no one to hinder them. They dressed Him up, thrust a crown of thorns on His head and mocked Him as a King; they blindfolded Him, punched, slapped Him, mocked Him and challenged Him to say who did it! It is not a nice scene. Even the 2 who were crucified alongside Jesus at one stage mocked Him too.

We would never mock Jesus would we? Really? We would not treat Him as convenient only at certain times of the year, or in a crisis situation in our life or the life of family but the rest of the time He is an irrelevance, or a

joke or just tucked away ‘just in case’! We may, in our own ways, be mocking Him.

4. Cruel Fools.

Not only did the soldiers mock and were cruel to the Lord Jesus in His trial, but also mocked Him as He hung on the cross, maybe encouraged the 2 thieves to do the same. Yet the soldiers seem very cruel and heartless as they crucified Him and not only divided up His clothes, but they gambled for one of His garments. At one stage offering Him wine vinegar to drink - which would no doubt have been bitter to taste and not done much for His thirst. Yet the soldiers were doing as they would have always done at a crucifixion and it would have been quite routine for them. We cannot understand that, but it shows how cruel people’s hearts can become and we could have no sympathy for someone who is suffering and even mock and be cruel to them.

If we could go back in time and be there around the cross of Jesus, I wonder what our reaction would be! Would it change at all as to how we would view the Lord Jesus now and what He was suffering for us? Yet the reality of the cross still stands to this day and not seeing such is no excuse not to change our response to the Lord Jesus and all that He did there for us.

5. Ignorant Fools.

Around the cross there was a huge crowd who as they were mocking Jesus, they showed they were ignorant of what Jesus was doing there on the cross. They mocked and said "*He saved others,*" ..., "*but He can't save Himself! He's the King of Israel! Let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him.*" They were ignorant of who it was there on that cross - the Son of God in real humanity and He had, even at that time, still all power in heaven and earth! Yes, He could have saved Himself, called legions of angels, but if He had, He would not have been able to save others - at that time, throughout history and even us in this church.

Do we think Jesus died because He was weak and His plans went wrong? Then think again and realise that He did not save Himself because He would save people like you and me even this day if we trust Him as our Saviour.

Amazingly some of those who looked to Jesus as someone remarkable and special, were also ignorant of events that 1st Easter weekend. The 2 on the road to Emmaus were ignorant of the wonder of Jesus' resurrection and were downhearted and poured out their complaints to the stranger who walked with them. This One – the risen Lord Jesus - called them "*How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!*" (NIV) (Luke 24:25)

Even followers of the Lord Jesus can be a bit dim-witted and have doubts at times as they have to learn things and grow in their understanding.

6. Doubting Fools.

We have just noticed that the 2 on the road to Emmaus were not only ignorant, but doubted that the things they'd been told of Jesus being raised from the dead were not true and heard Jesus' strong words to them. Thankfully He is gentle as well and He explained to them from all the OT the things that were said about Himself and that He had to die and rise again.

As we would expect, His enemies would not believe He had risen from the dead (*a real nightmare situation if He had!*) Incredibly the women who were 1st at the tomb to hear the great news did not initially believe either and even as they told the disciples many of them could not believe and doubted. Dr Luke tells us that even when Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room, *they still did not believe because of joy and amazement!* (24:40). Mark tells us that Jesus had to tell them off for their unbelief and their doubting that He had risen from the dead.

A number have people have tried to discredit and disprove the resurrection, but as they've looked at the evidence from not only what the Bible says, but also from historical writings and have come to realise that Jesus really did rise

from the dead and they stopped doubting and trusted the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. A number of them have been lawyers who took and analysed the evidence for and against and ended up concluding that there is overwhelming evidence of Jesus' resurrection. In His lifetime Jesus made incredible claims, so much so that we just can't leave Him as a good man or a teacher or even a prophet. It's been said that we only have 3 options regarding who Jesus is - He is either a madman, a liar or is truly the Son of God. If He thought He was the Son of God and was deluded then He is a madman; if He knew we wasn't the Son of God and said He was then He is a liar, but if He is who He says He is and that He came to save all who trust in Him, then we need to take notice and trust Him as our own Saviour for time and eternity. I would urge you not to be a doubting fool, but to become

7. Believing Fools.

When you become a Christian, society around, family and friends might think you are complete fool. It is incredible that God would love people like us so much that He would send His own Son to die on the cross of Calvary, to take all our wrong in our place so that we can have peace with God, but then God raised Jesus from the dead and He ascended to heaven and is willing to save people who had no real time for Him. In fact, the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth and said "*For the message of the cross is foolishness*" - the Easter message of Jesus death and resurrection is so foolish to many. Yet what Paul actually

wrote was *“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”* While society, family and friends may consider that we are foolish to believe, we will be counted wise by God and more than that, we are being rescued, saved through all that Jesus accomplished there on the cross. Paul also wrote a little further on in the same letter (1 Corinthians 2:14 NKJV) *“the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*

What about us here this morning? We may not want to look foolish, but as a missionary pilot who died in taking this message to a primitive tribe back in the 1950s, Jim Elliot wrote and said *“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”* When we trust the Lord Jesus we have eternal life and enjoyment of that isn't for after our life ends, but it begins now in a remarkable way as we can know God's love, care, help, joy and keeping in all that we go through in life and even then, we realise the best will be waiting for us.

My prayer this morning is that we would all know that Jesus has risen and we all are no fools to have Him as our Saviour, to live for Him in the way that He wants and to know every day the great joy and hope that He is alive and we can declare that Jesus has risen.