

January 29, 2017
1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Matthew 5:1-12

There are many people who shout foolish things from the rafters these days. Choose your social media platform – Facebook, Twitter, snapchat – the foolishness of Americans is out there for the world to see. Certain people have built a business out of their foolishness. Gathering followers and friends and contacts to track their behaviors and opinions, their foolishness spreads like wildfire across our society. And we buy into it. We fuel their foolishness by following their antics. We are not only entertained by, but also strangely trust these figures to interpret life and faith and politics for us.

The fool has always been a noble character, speaking truth to power in ancient realms. The fool was the person who dared to mock the ruler. The fool was the figure who danced through the streets with the commoners. The fool was the one who brought news from village to village, and gossip from court to court. The fool, the jester, the clown... they did not have political power or wealth or lands or other things that the world gave to a leader or important person, yet the fool was among the most powerful. With a word and a gesture, through their own foolishness, they pointed to the fatal flaws that surrounded the people.

Paul wrote about God's foolishness to the church in Corinth. How foolish for God to be born as a human, as if there was a beginning to God's being. How foolish for God to die on a cross, when divinity was equated with immortality. How foolish for God to show weakness in shedding blood, sweat, and tears, when God should have shown only strength and separate-ness. How foolish for God to associate with the unfaithful and sinful instead of with the elite, "righteous," learn-ed Temple leadership.

Yet, as Paul wrote, “God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong...” The tables were turned, once again. What we thought God would be, is not what God is at all. Paul wrote these words many years after Jesus delivered his famous Sermon on the Mount. but when paired with the Beatitudes, suddenly those beloved, familiar words sound ridiculously foolish!

How foolish to tell someone whose spirit is broken that the kingdom of heaven is theirs. Because they *don't* see it and feel it where they are. How foolish to tell someone in the depths of grief, whose parent or child or spouse or friend has died – how foolish to tell them that they will be comforted. Because they only feel loss, and nothing eases that pain. How foolish to tell the meek that they will become the powerful. How foolish to tell those who hunger and thirst that they will be filled. How foolish!

“God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom... God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong...”

Those who mourn, the meek, the peacemakers, the merciful, the pure in heart – they are the weak players on the world’s stage. Those are the ones who shame the rest by living a “blessed” life. This blessedness is not “happiness”, but specialness. The blessed, the needy are given special recognition by God. While the world attends to the wise and strong, God looks to the foolish and weak.

As individuals, we are challenged to follow God’s foolishness, not the world’s. We are called away from the world’s palaces and power players, and into the broken, shabby shacks of the blessed. It is foolish not to support the powerful. It is foolish to

worship only one God instead of hedging our bets with others. It is foolish to feed and house the stranger and tend the sick and love your neighbor. It is foolish to be the stranger and accept care from an unknown person. It is foolish to grieve and expect comfort. Yet this is exactly what Jesus called his disciples to do.

As the church, we do not follow the powerful, wise, predictable people. We do not listen only to wise elders. Instead, we proclaim God's foolishness wherein the meek, the broken, and the pure in heart are celebrated. We look for a little child to lead us. We expect the least of us to be the greatest. We look for the last to become first, and the first to become last.

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Let's play the fool together.