

EASTER ON APRIL FOOLS DAY**Luke 24:1-12**

INTRO: As heavy rains persisted in the days leading up to May 31, 1889, members of the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club in Pennsylvania, which owned the land around Lake Conemaugh, noticed that the decrepit South Fork Dam, which held back that same lake was leaking more and more. They tried to clear spillways to alleviate the problem but as the deluge persisted – it was estimated that 12 inches of rain fell in just a couple days – they sent riders to the towns downstream to be warned of an impending flood. The messengers were ignored and no warning was ever issued and the horrific wall of water that occurred as the dam broke and roared down the valley was over 60 feet high and filled with whatever debris it picked up along the way. Trees, houses, railroad cars and locomotives slammed into Johnstown with cataclysmic force and at least 2,209 people were killed.

The word went out, but it was ignored. People died.

Over some 20 years Dr. Larry Nassar sexually molested the young female gymnasts who came to him for treatment. Some of them were Olympians because he was also connected with the U.S. Olympic team. Hundreds of girls were assaulted. Some spoke up over the years but were not believed or told to keep it quiet. Most did not speak out because they suspected they would not be believed. Finally, someone believed them and Nassar was brought to trial. As many of us watched, almost 200 girls were able to confront him at his sentencing. He will spend the rest of his life in prison – but because people didn't believe those little girls or act on the obvious warning signs, for that matter, the lives of many women have been scarred for life.

Several women came running back into Jerusalem with news that Jesus had risen from the grave and their message was dismissed as foolish. So it's appropriate that on the April 1, we have Easter on April Fools Day. Listen to our text for today from Luke 24:1-12 (It will not be on the screen because it's pretty long)

On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " Then they remembered his words.

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.

Well, for a lot of people the resurrection still seems like nonsense. But the truth is, we know what the truth is, and we celebrate that on this Resurrection Day. Paul told the Corinthian church . . . *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.* 1 Corinthians 1:18. Yes, what we believe is often seen as foolishness. But for those who are saved it is the message of hope and joy and eternal life. For the next few minutes there are several things I want to point out. The first is. . .

Sometimes the Good News will be disregarded because of the messenger

- We need to be ready for that. Its okay. We are in good company.
- Like the young gymnasts in the Larry Nassar case were disbelieved because of who and what they were, these woman who joyously rushed into town with word of a resurrected Jesus were dismissed simply because they were women. What can women know? Women just get hysterical. They're just getting carried away with wishful thinking. What kind of a message can a woman have – especially when men are there to set the record straight? That is the way women were regarded then and too often it is still how they are received. What message could a woman have from God? Well – on that very first day of a resurrected Lord, they had the Good News of the empty tomb directly from the mouths of the angels of the Lord.
- We too, will be regarded as foolish messengers. Many people today are certain that what Christians are celebrating at Easter is a foolish fabrication that is no more than a fairytale. Of course there is no God and if he did exist, people certainly don't come back from the dead. Not only that, we will be derided as crazy and stupid and silly. That's okay – foolishness in the eyes the world is the hope of that same world.

- So go forth with the message. Augustine said that these women who came back with the happy message of an empty grave were the apostles to the apostles. They were the messengers to the messengers. So don't be frustrated with the response to your belief or your message – just persist and the truth will prevail.
- Another thing we see here is . . .

The disciples just weren't in the mood to believe

- Can you blame them? They're heard the reports – maybe they even watched the crucifixion from a safe distance. They knew the truth, JESUS WAS DEAD! Get used to it! I'm too depressed to hear this kinda nonsense!
- We've talked about this before, but we need to be reminded, of the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual state of the disciples. They were wrecked in every way. In one week they had gone from a high tide of the certainty they would be Jesus's cabinet when he took over as the true king of the Jews – to fearing for their lives at the hands of the Romans who dealt viciously with insurrectionists. In just a few days they had sunk from the spiritual mountain top of Jesus's teachings to having all faith dashed to pieces as their rabbi bled and suffocated to death on the cruelty of the cross. They were totally and completely emotionally and mentally spent.
- There was plain and simply nothing left to believe the delirious message of the women who had just returned from the garden tomb. That's what the Greek word translated as nonsense here in the NIV means at its core. It is the word from which we get the words delirious and delirium from. Have you ever seen someone who is delirious from fever or from some kind of medication? They make no sense. Truly what they say is nonsense. This is how the disciples received the word from the women. They were capable of little else – they'd seen their hope die on a cross. They were in no mood to believe.
- In our jaded world it's not a wonder that people are not in the mood to believe. They are every bit as mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually spent as the disciples. Even if one wanted to, believing that God exists takes too much effort. And to think that such a God loves them and has a wonderful plan for them, is far too fantastical to believe. One would have to be delirious to accept that. Right?
- Besides, on the small chance it is true, who wants to have their style cramped that way? I mean seriously.
- But at some point, everyone who chose to reject the good news of the resurrection, will wish that they had been in the mood to believe. It'll be at that point that they will realize that they were the ones who fell for nonsense.
- That brings me to my final thought. You see, there's always room for doubt and faulty decision making . . .

When God is left out of the equation

- The Jewish people rejected the possibility that Jesus could be Messiah because a crucified Messiah was incomprehensible to Jewish thought. Anyone hung on a tree was cursed. For the Romans only a lowly native of the conquered provinces could be crucified. A Roman citizen would never be lowered to such a punishment – they had the honor of being beheaded instead. Jesus couldn't be God if he died that way. Right? You'd have to be a fool to believe that. Right?
- And if one decides to come to what the world sees as the rational decision that there is no God or at least they have no need for God – that would prove that one would not be a fool, right? That is how many think. That is the conclusion of those who reject the Bible. And that is considered to be wisdom.
- And I guess I would have to agree. I mean I would have to agree that is worldly wisdom. Because I agree with Paul who quotes Isaiah 29 with, *"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."* 1 Corinthians 1:19 and then continues with, *Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?* 1 Corinthians 1:20.
- It turns out that God was so crazy about us that he went to crazy ends to make a way for salvation to be available for whoever would be foolish enough to accept it. So that is how it is incredibly appropriate that on this day which is April 1st, which in every other year is known as April Fools Day, we have Easter. Easter on April Fools Day. I'm a fool for the risen Christ, whose fool are you? Amen.