

John 20:1-18

“He Aint No Fool”

Okay. I know it's Easter Sunday. I know it's the day we celebrate Jesus' victory over sin and death, but let's get this straight. Jesus had died. As far as anyone knew Jesus was still dead. Jesus was dead. And Jesus died a fool. Jesus had tangled with the wrong people, and got Himself killed. Jesus had stood up to the Jews, preaching in their synagogues and even the temple in Jerusalem. His teaching offended the Pharisees and Sadducees. They arrested Jesus, struck and spat upon Him before trying Him. The Jews arrested Jesus for threatening to destroy the temple. They convicted Jesus of claiming to be the Son of God. Which is not the way that is supposed to work. The Jews handed Jesus over to the Romans because the Jews could not kill Jesus. Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, questioned Jesus and had Jesus caned, and scourged that it might satisfy the crowds who were threatening to riot. As the Jews stirred up the crowds, the Roman soldiers put a rag of a purple cape over Jesus' shoulders and twisted together a cruel crown of thorns which they pushed down on Jesus head. They made fun of Jesus and spat upon Him and struck him. Pilate brought Jesus out before the people and had the robe pulled off of Jesus; reopening all of Jesus' many, many wounds. Then Jesus was forced to carry a heavy wooden cross to the hill of the skull, a place called Golgotha. There Jesus was crucified. Crucifixion was a death meant for traitors and insurrectionists. The idea was to make a statement people were not to mess with the Romans. Jesus died on the cross. Jesus was dead, and Jesus died a fool for messing with the wrong people.

My sisters and brothers in spite of all appearances to the contrary Jesus knew what Jesus was doing. It absolutely looked like foolishness, but Jesus had to go through all of that terrible, terrible stuff. The reason Jesus had to go through all of that is because none of us, and I mean none of us could. None of us could have withstood the torture Jesus faced. None of us could have kept silent the way Jesus did before His accusers and His tormentors. Even if we could have suffered all of that without falling into our humanness it would not have mattered. We are all stained with original sin and bear it as brightly as crimson blood on fresh fallen snow. Jesus had to come. Jesus had to bear the price. Jesus had to be the sacrifice none of us can.

So what about us? What about us? People thought Jesus was foolish for speaking out against the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Romans. People thought Jesus was foolish for suffering all Jesus suffered. People thought Jesus was foolish for dying on the cross. I know today is April Fool's day, but Jesus is not a fool. Jesus is not a fool. Amen? **Amen**. Jesus is not a fool! Amen?! **Amen!** He Aint No Fool! Amen?! **Amen!!** Jesus went through all of that disrespect, all of that embarrassment, all of that torture, and all of that pain to pay the price for our foolishness. Jesus had to go through all of that torture to pay the price so we could be washed clean. Jesus was not a fool. Jesus loves us. And now, though our sins be as stark as crimson, thanks to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ our sins are now as white as snow. Jesus did the work and made the sacrifice we cannot. (pause) and yet we still try.

Let me ask y'all something. What is works righteousness? (pause) What is works righteousness? (pause) Do you know? (pause) Anybody? (pause) Works righteousness is trying to earn favor with God through works. Works righteousness is trying to earn our salvation. Do you know another name for works righteousness? (pause) Foolishness. Trying to earn our way to heaven is foolish.

#1 Jesus Christ has already done the work, and paid the price that we might all have salvation if we would just accept God's free grace and believe in God, surrender to Jesus Christ as our lord and savior, and accept the gift of the Holy Spirit (Matt 28:19).

#2 Even if we could fulfill the requirement, and suffer the things Christ did it would not matter because we are marked by Original Sin. What is original Sin? Original Sin is the first act of

deliberate disobedience to God, and we do it every day. Every one of us deliberately disobeys God in some way, every day. We are not capable of earning salvation, and we are not a worthy enough sacrifice to pay the debt of our sin. And yet God loves us anyway.

Brothers and sisters, hear the good news. Hear me now. Pay attention. Don't miss this. God loves you. I don't care what you've done. I don't care who you have done it to. God loves you. God loves every person you have wronged and God loves you. God loves every person in this room, and God loves every person outside of these walls. God's love is not limited by age. God's love is not limited by race. God's love is not limited by how much money you have, or how little money the people outside these walls have. God's love is not limited by the stains you carry for your favorite sin. Christ died for us because Christ loves us.

All of this brings us to the tomb. Christ's death pays the price for all of our sins. But what then? What happens next? Yes. Our sins have been washed clean by the blood of Christ offered in God's justifying grace. What now? What do we do now? (**pause**) Now, we go to the tomb. Jesus died to pay the price for all of our sins, but those women did not know that yet. They just knew the Christ; their rabbi, Jesus was dead. They were going to the tomb to pay respect to the body as a part of their mourning. This was the custom of Jewish people at the time. They would cover the body with aloe and ointments and wrap the body in bands of cloth. When Jesus was born he was wrapped in swaddling cloths, and when He died Jesus was wrapped in bands of cloth. Jesus was laid in a freshly hewn tomb with no other bodies in it and a heavy stone had been rolled over the door. Now the tomb of Jesus Christ was not a safety deposit box that could be broken into and the sacrifice paid to cover our sins stolen away. That price for our sins is paid, and the amount accepted. Even if Jesus' body had been stolen the price for our sins would have still been paid. No no. Jesus' body being gone did not mean Jesus' sacrifice was null and void. When the stone was rolled away and Jesus walked out it meant something completely different.

It is easy to see the reasons why the women were upset when they saw Jesus's body was gone. One of the reasons it is scary for us is the fear our salvation was taken out the door with the body of Christ. Rest assured this is not the case. The price is paid, and we are saved. What's more we have this promise. Just because we have lived one way it does not mean we have to continue to live that way. Just because we have sinned it does not mean we have to continue sinning. We do not have to continue in the patterns and behaviors which have enslaved and harmed us for so long. We do not have to drive ourselves to exhaustion trying to earn something which has already been paid for. In addition to Christ's sacrifice on the cross, God offers us God's self. God sends the Holy Spirit whom Jesus called the, "Counselor" (John 14:25). Where Prevenient grace calls us to the cross, and Justifying grace washes us clean of our sin by the blood of Jesus Christ, Sanctifying grace goes with us. Sanctifying grace continues to walk with us down life's roads. If we will but listen to the Spirit's guidance, and respond to God's nudgings we can grow closer God in ways we never thought possible. When Christ leaves the tomb it provides us the opportunity to grow into a more abundant life of love for God and love for others which brings with it peace, hope and love for eternity.

Sisters and brothers. Jesus is not a fool. All of salvation comes down to Jesus dying on the cross and saving the world because that is what God said He would do. How about us? Will we do what we said we would do? Will we be obedient to God's call on our lives? We we seek to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength. Will we love others as Christ loves us? Jesus isn't a fool for loving God and loving us. Can we say the same thing about ourselves and each other?

In the name of Jesus Christ - Amen