

WGUMC April 1, 2018 “Resurrection Foolishness” Luke 24:1-12  
*“We are fools for the sake of Christ”* I Cor 4:10

It was the greatest upset of all time. Better than the Cubs winning the World Series in 2016. Better than the “miracle on ice” that was the 1980 men’s hockey team. If you had bet on this game, you would have backed the Romans. But the women coming to the tomb in the early morning on the first day of the week had placed their bet on Jesus. And they had really wanted him to pull it out before the final buzzer. But he didn’t. He died and everyone left the stands and went home.

Except the women. The women were true believers. Not just fans but fanatic. And now they were going to have to figure out how they would ever live it down. What could they say to their family? How would they face their friends who would think rightly that they had been fools?

Still in shock over their devastating loss, the women went to the tomb in the darkness before dawn. I imagine that they weren’t anxious to meet anyone. But after finding the stone rolled away and

the tomb empty, they met two dazzling angels. They were terrified. Had the angels come to mock them for believing in Jesus? To condemn them for being fools for following a false prophet? Was God angry at them, sending avenging angels to punish them? With everything that had happened in the past few days, you couldn't blame them for fearing that some awful new evil had befallen them.

But these were no avenging angels. They were not angels of death. They were messengers of life. They asked the women, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" And then came the game-changer: "He is not here, but has risen." In just seven words, the angels turned what looked like a total loss into an upset win. The dead came to life. A tomb became a womb.

This was the exact opposite of evil. By the way, spell evil backwards and what do you get? Live! Jesus conquered sin and death and evil and now lives.

But the men back then weren't buying it. When the women went to tell them about the empty tomb, the angels, the

resurrection, the men thought it was an idle tale, a rumor, gossip, fake news. This wasn't the first and it certainly wouldn't be the last time that a group of men refused to believe a number of credible women. God raised Jesus in three days, but it would take quite a bit longer to raise men's consciousness!

They thought the women were fools and so they were. They were fools for love. There is no good reason to believe in the resurrection. It has no rational explanation. I tried to give it one a few years back. In 2012, I preached a sermon that laid out a case for Easter for engineers. But this year, Easter is for lovers.

The French philosopher Blaise Pascal wrote in the 17<sup>th</sup> century: "The heart has reasons that reason knows not of." Though I like to think that I'm a rational human being, I know that it isn't a rational act to fall in love. And when we are talking about whether or not we believe in the resurrection what we are really talking about is whether or not we are ready to fall in love. The cross is the proof

that Christ fell in love with us. What we make of the resurrection determines whether we are willing to fall in love with Christ.

I walked out of the Good Friday service at Almaden Hills the other night and the full moon was shining big and bright. To be sure, it was a moon for lovers, and I took it as a sign from God. It made me reminisce about what it's like to fall in love. Remember? Everything becomes a blur. Pressing demands fade away. Our whole world revolves around this new thing. Every thought, every word, every action is drenched with feeling, dripping with meaning. We are ecstatic, a word that means that we are out of place, we are taken out of ourselves and into a relationship that will transform us in ways we cannot know and, what's more, we do not care. We become fools for love. I know Hank and I did. We had to wait a long time. You could say that we were like overripe fruit and when we fell, we made a big splat! I know Kristen is glad she wasn't around for that.

Now if you think falling in love with another human being is an awesome feeling, try falling in love with the risen Christ. It will change everything, not just the way you feel. Falling in love with Christ changes the way you see. Instead of always seeing the bad in everyone and everything, you begin to see the good. Falling in love with Christ changes the way you relate to things. Instead of fearing the other, you regard them as sister, brother. Falling in love with Christ changes the way you think about the future. Instead of trying to hold onto something that needs to come to an end, you throw your arms around what is about to begin. Besides that, Jesus will never nag you, never cheat on you, never call you fat. He's no deadbeat. More of heartbeat.

So I can remember the day I fell in love with Jesus. Can you? It's really an indescribable thing. But be warned: if you dare to fall in love with Christ, be prepared to be called a fool. For as Loyola's 98-year-old chaplain, Sister Jean knows, even when you pray, your team will not always win.

Jonathan and Leah Wilson-Hartgrove are a couple of fools who went to Duke Divinity School a few years after I did. In 2003, just before the Iraq War broke out, they were part of a Christian Peacemaker Team that went on location to try to head off the invasion. They didn't succeed.

As the bombs started to fall, their team piled into cars to make their escape. But the car ahead of them crashed and some fellow teammates were thrown from the vehicle. Jonathan and Leah jumped out to help, but they didn't know what to do. Just then some Iraqis drove up. Seeing the wounded Americans lying in the ditch, they picked them up and carried them to a town called Rutba. When they got to the little clinic there, the doctor said, "Three days ago your country bombed our hospital. But we will take care of you." When Jonathan asked what he owed him, he said, "Nothing. Please just tell the world what has happened in Rutba."

Jonathan and Leah went home to racially-divided Durham and started a house for hospitality in a poor, African American

neighborhood. These fools for Christ called it Rutba House. They still live there and they are still telling the story of the Good Samaritans they met in Iraq.

But you will find fools like them a lot closer to home. I heard about one who lives in Oakland. His name is Daryle Allums. In one year, he lost seven members of his family to gun violence, and he decided that his life from that point on would be dedicated to lowering the homicide rate in his hometown. So he put photos of shooting victims on some poster board and put the poster board in one of those rolling carts and took it to a corner on MacArthur Blvd and started shouting out at the cars and passersby: “Stop killing my kids. Stop killing my kids.” He told a journalist, “Yea, I’m the one with the purple hair on MacArthur yelling...Even my pastor thinks I’m crazy.” But Daryle Allums is not crazy. He’s just a fool for Christ.

In a few days, we will mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr., who was shot on Good Friday, 1968. King was a fool for Christ if there ever was one. Sometimes he talked

about his death. A couple of months before he died, he told folks that he didn't want a long funeral. He didn't want anyone to go on and on about his winning the Nobel Prize or any other awards. He said, "I'd like for somebody to say that day that Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to love somebody."

What could possibly have motivated King to try to love so many somebodies? What makes Daryle Allums keep working for life in the midst of so much violence and death? What keeps the Hartgroves committed to radical hospitality in such a racially-polarized country? The same thing that makes you love your inlaws and your outlaws, your unfriendly neighbor, your ex, a total stranger.

The angels said, "He is not here but has risen." Their message was no idle tale, but the women had no idea that it would lead to so much resurrection foolishness. The women were and we are called to be fools for love. In fact, when it comes to whether or not anyone believes that Christ is alive and at work in the world today, faithful fools are the only evidence the church will ever have, and the only



evidence it will ever need. So go ahead, fall for Jesus and then let him lift you up. Live your love out loud, for your life may well be the proof of the resurrection that the world is waiting to see. Christ is risen in you and in me. He is risen indeed. Alleluia!