

## **"Out of the Darkness and into God's Light"**

**John 20: 1- 18**

**Easter Sunday, April 4, 2021**

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This journey of Lent is many things. It is a call to follow Jesus to Jerusalem and on to Calvary. It is a call to let go of those things that weigh us down and are not important and to examine those truths that are; those things that matter to God. In doing so, it is also a call for us to repent of our sinful selves so that we may turn to God and make this journey together.

This journey is one that calls on us to look at what Jesus is heading to in a different way than the world will look at it. For Jesus is heading to the cross. The world will look at the cross as an emblem of suffering and shame and, most importantly, a final statement to one who was seen as a threat. But you and I are called on to view the cross with all of its negativity, but rather than it being a final statement. We are to see in it God's plan and God's good purpose.

The cross is for the world, a symbol of death, but not just death, it is a symbol of a humiliating death, that while you hang there to die, you do so with the utmost humiliation and pain, and yes, all the shame one may feel as much as the agony your body bears.

That is the cross in the eyes of the world. But to God, God sees it as a path forward for all who would turn to him. The cross was meant for the worst of the worst, those condemned by the laws of Rome and occasionally, as we see in the case of Jesus, the Jewish laws. Any Jew hanging on a cross would have been not only condemned because of their punishment, but as they hang there naked and bleeding, they would have been considered even more unclean. In the eyes of the Pharisees, Priests, and Sadducees, as well as the Royal family, they would be cast off, forgotten forever as the psalmist warns.

But that symbol of shame and banishment, torture and ridicule is exactly the tool that God chooses to use as the way toward redemption. To do so seems like foolishness to the world. It would be like taking the electric chair or that lethal injection in our own day and saying the only way you can come to God is by this humiliating death.

But it is through Jesus Christ, the Son of God that we come to this humiliating death. For you see, none of us are without sin. None of us deserves to live a pain-free life, a life of ease and comfort because we are deserving of it. We are all broken; we all bear the mark of shame in some way in our life.

But it is only those who see their shame and bare it before God and seek to follow Jesus who will find that this foolishness of the cross actually becomes the ticket to a life with God. For it is by the cross, this humiliating symbol of death and shame, that God ultimately goes to and dies

our death, takes on our shame, and hands back to us his gift of life. That is why it is so vital that we take this time during Lent to follow Jesus; to really understand and appreciate the lengths that Jesus goes to, to seek out the lost, the forgotten, the wounded, the criminal, the insane, the dregs of society and to say to each and every one of us,

"God loves you this much."

That is precisely Paul's point in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians about the cross. To a world that thinks it is better than this, the cross is foolish, and those going to it deserve it. But Jesus is saying, if you follow me to the cross, I will take your death and give you life. I will take your sins and give you grace. I will take your pain and heal your wound and your sadness. But in return, you must turn and follow me.

Repent and believe the good news that Jesus Christ died while we were yet sinners. This proves God's love toward us. That he would go to that cross and die our death, take our shame, and offer to heal our wounds. This generous offer is not just made to you and me. It is an offer made to the whole world, to accept grace, to look upon our God as the one who would go to the cross for all of us. And then to see the face of Christ in all of our neighbors around the world.

I know, I know, it all sounds like foolishness, and it is... To those who are perishing, but to all who are being saved, it is the power of God for God's foolishness is greater than our wisest minds, and God's weakness is greater than the most powerful beings in the world.

As we live in a world that seems to worship power and strength, strategic wisdom and political connections, and financial wizardry, a world that thinks it knows how to get ahead but only seems bogged down in its own mess.

God's crazy scheme of following Jesus to the cross, to an unbelieving world, certainly is foolishness. To those who have no faith, it is nonsense. But to those who are being saved. It is the power of God.

Jesus tells the priests and Pharisees that he will rebuild it in three days if they tear down the temple. It sounds not just foolish but absolutely ludicrous. Any way you want to look at it.

The temple took over 70 years to rebuild after the first one was destroyed. But that was not the temple he was talking about. The temple he was talking about would sound even more bazaar; it would be his body.

And yet, that is what Jesus does. And that is why it is important to see the cross for what it truly is to us who believe. It is God's crazy scheme; not just because it seems to lead to an undignified death, but rather it is a path that calls us to live in grace, to fill our hearts with

hope, love, patience, generosity, kindness, gentleness. All of this is just pure foolishness to the world. But to God, nothing could be more precious in his sight.