

Homily :: 01-Feb-2026
Epi 4 , Year A (and Annual Meeting)

“ God’s *FOOLISHness*
is wiser than human *wisdom* ”

The message is *almost* blasphemous ... *almost* heretical, isn’t it? Saint Paul dances right *at* the line of calling the *Cross* *FOOLISH* ... of calling our *faith* *FOOLISH* ... even of calling *Jesus* *FOOLISH*: “weak” ... “low” ... “despised.” But then, as always, Paul makes a *turn* ... starts with an uncomfortable thought and ends up with a provocative idea: The very *FOOLISHness* of *God* is wiser than any *human* *wisdom*.

And what *is* this divine *FOOLISHness*: wiser than any sage or guru ... more brilliant than any scholar or commentator ... more compelling than any politician or demagogue? It is, I think, to do—almost *always*—the *opposite of what the world would do* ... of what we *humans* would naturally or *instinctively do* ... at *every* critical juncture. So, Paul says, even though the ‘world’ demanded a savior-*king* who basked, unmistakably, in God’s resplendent glory ... or a savior-*philosopher* who wondrously wowed the world with his intellectual prowess ... *God* gave us *Jesus*: *seemingly*, an ordinary, humble—perhaps even *forgettable*—human being ... who proclaimed the unconditional, unlimited love of God ‘merely’ by how He *lived* ... how he *spoke* ... how He *died*—and then *rose again*. God undoubtedly *knew* that a *flashy royal* or *irresistible ideologue* might gain more ‘traction’ with humanity ... but God seeks *love*, not adulation; *faith*, not ratings. Such is God’s *FOOLISHness*.

Likewise, we hear Jesus, today, begin preaching one of His most *FOOLISH* sermons, in which He turns the ways of this world completely upside-down. He upends our smug human logic and shatters our convenient human values by naming as privileged ... as *extra*-specially beloved in the eyes of God ... those whom the ‘world’ overlooks, dismisses or wishes would just go away: those who *mourn*, those who are *meek*, those who are *oppressed* ... those who *show* mercy, those who *make* peace, those who seek to *lift up* the *oppressed*. *You*, Jesus says, may see no reason to truck with such ‘losers’ ... but *God* does. *You* may see no value in *extending* and *spending* *self* for the sake of *others* ... but *I* *can’t not*. Such is God’s *FOOLISHness*.

**

Jesus’ message for us is clear: It’s when we’re swimming most strenuously and courageously *against* the tide of this world, rather than passively and idly floating along *with* it ... which is to say: when we’re doing the *opposite* of what the *world* would do ... when we’re being *FOOLISH*, in the eyes of the *world* ... that we are *wisest*, in the eyes of *God*.

And perhaps *nowhere* are we more *FOOLISH*-looking in the eyes of the world ... *nowhere* do we act more ‘*counterculturally*,’ in the eyes of our more generous critics ... *nowhere* are we more *naïve*, in the eyes of our cynical detractors ... than *here*: in the *Church*. In *having* a church ... in *belonging* to a church ... in *attending* a church ... in giving *money* to a church ... in *volunteering* for a church ... in *thinking* a church can make any *difference*.

- In an ever-more *secular*—even actively *anti-religious*—world ... we steadfastly insist upon the *sacred*: our fundamental belief that *this* material world .. flesh-and blood, bricks-and mortar, wealth-and-power ... is *not* all there is. Such is the ‘*FOOLISH*’ *wisdom* of *God*.

- In a staunchly *rational* world (although maybe, now, *decreasingly* so?) ... we boldly proclaim our *faith* in Christ: incapable of ‘proof’ and yet truer than the wetness of water. Such is the ‘FOOLISH’ *wisdom* of God.
- In a world that has turned its *back* on organized religion—‘I can “be spiritual” all by myself, thanks’ ... we persist in our belief that it takes a *village* to raise a Christian ... that all of us are *individual members* belonging to *one single Body*: members that *yearn* to be *whole*—to be *one*. Such is the ‘FOOLISH’ *wisdom* of God.
- And in a world that valorizes *pleasure* and *self-gratification* above all else ... we make sacrifice upon sacrifice, in the Name of God: donating money to keep All Souls’ going ... offering our time and our skills, for free, to extend All Souls’ ministry and outreach ... and *perhaps* most radically of *all*: coming *here, every* Sunday morning ... yes, sacrificing our precious *leisure* time ... but even more so, our “praise and thanksgiving” (BCP, p 369): We make our way here, week after week after week ... to worship a God Who is *greater* than we ... *higher* than we ... more *powerful* than we ... *farther-visioned* than we ... more *knowing* than we ... more *forgiving* than we ... and more *loving* than we.
> So much of the world looks at us holding our ‘trite little rituals’ here every Sunday morning and laughs ... scornfully asking, Why *bother?! What’s the point?! Do you really believe* all that *nonsense?* But *we* wake up on a Sunday morning and know—*somehow*—that we *cannot* stay *away*. Such is the ‘FOOLISH’ *wisdom* of God.

Yes, the Church ... *this church* ... All Souls’ Episcopal Church ... is *part-and-parcel* of the ‘FOOLISH’ wisdom of God—of God’s plan for the salvation and perfection of this world ... because gathered here, we are three *essential*—three *daring*—three *holy*—things, all at *once*:

- The *love* and the *mission* of Jesus require *hands-and-feet* to make them *real* in this world ... and we are God’s ‘wise FOOLS’ who gladly *supply* them
- The *community around us* requires a *sheltering* place ... a *welcoming* place ... a *no-judgment* place ... a *joyful* place ... to *gather*, to *do*, and, sometimes, just to *be* ... and we are God’s ‘wise FOOLS’ who warmly open our doors, and our *hearts*, to them.
- And we—we *ourselves*—need a ‘Jesus family’: ¶a family with whom to *worship, pray* and *renew* ourselves spiritually; ¶a family to *love* and *care* for, and who loves and cares for *us*, as well; ¶and a family with whom to join hands and go out into the world, to *serve others* ... and we are God’s ‘wise FOOLS’ who rejoice in *being* that family, for one another.

No, it isn’t *wise* or *efficient* or even *rational*, by the standards of *this* world. It’s not *showy* or *glittering* or *regal*. The Church ... *this church* ... All Souls’ Episcopal Church ... may, indeed, be one of the most *FOOLISH* things in Christ’s Kingdom. And in its *FOOLISHNESS* lies not only the loftiest *height* of God’s *wisdom* ... but also the deepest *depths* of Christ’s *love* ... for *us*, and for the *whole world*.

THE REV DOUGLAS S WORTHINGTON
All Souls’ Episcopal Church
San Diego, CA

© 2025 Douglas S Worthington, all rights reserved