

The subject for today is foolishness. A number of years ago, some firemen in Virginia wanted new helmets. The helmets they ordered were colorful, high-impact plastic. They would adjust to head size and resist scuffing. There was only one thing wrong. When you got them near heat, they melted.

The subject for today is foolishness. In California there was a 20 foot modern metal sculpture called, "Great Planes Study Number Seven." It was destroyed by workmen with bulldozers. The workmen thought it was junk. Worse, it was more than a year before somebody noticed the sculpture was missing. Worse still, city officials paid the artist to replace it.

A foolish moment is when you eat corndogs, deep fried bananas, and cotton candy and then get on the tilt-a-whirl at the fair. When I push on the door that says "pull," that's a foolish moment. We've all had them. When you start your car and it's already running, that noise tells everybody around, you've had a foolish moment.

The Bible tells us human beings have had a lot of foolish moments. When Adam and Eve said, 'you know, maybe this being like God thing is a good idea,' that was a tragically foolish moment. When Peter swore he didn't know Jesus three times, that was an exceptionally foolish moment. Look at every Scriptural personality and you will see that not one of them escaped having a foolish moment. All did things they regretted; spoke words they wished they could have recalled; took paths they wished they could have retraced.

Now let's be clear. When you do something like lock yourself out of your own house, you feel silly. But when you reject Jesus, the 'foolish moment' takes on an infinitely darker meaning. Foolishly avoiding the power of His cross is not merely silly; it is self-destructive. And there is no foolishness more heartbreaking than when broken people reject the message of the cross. It is worse than a drowning man laughing at the life preserver thrown to him. It is worse than the hospital patient making fun of the nurse who approaches his bed with medicine. Paul is right when he said, "The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing." But this is not an amusing foolishness. It is a strange foolishness which leads to despair and death of the soul.

God's powerful message of salvation is a simple one. Because of the ways we have gone against God and the people in our lives, we deserve to be punished. Justice demands it. No one can argue that it is unfair. There is no escape. There is no reprieve. There is no parole.

But rather than sentencing us for our crimes, God had His own Son nailed to the cross in our place. Supreme Court justices don't do that. Federal Judges don't do that. Judges don't fine their children for the crimes of others. But that's what God, in His grace, did for you. God's Son has lived for you and fulfilled the law for you. God's Son suffered and died for you. He was executed for your crimes and mine. That's what happened at the cross. What do you think of that?

I'll tell you what the wisdom of the world thinks. The message of the cross is foolishness to those who perishing. You know why? Because there is nothing at the cross that worldly wisdom values. You don't seem to find any power at the cross; you only see a man powerless to stop his own death. You don't seem to find any glory at the cross; you only see shame and disgust. You don't seem to find any economic advantage at the cross; for crying out loud, they are gambling for Jesus' clothing while He's dying. You don't see any popularity at the cross; only a handful of people stay to the bitter end—the rest have deserted Jesus. Clearly the cross means Jesus is a loser, not a winner, not by worldly standards. Foolishness.

But to us who are being saved, it is the power of God. This is dynamite. Literally. The Greek word for "power" in that sentence is the same word from which we get our word "dynamite." To us who are being saved, the message of the cross is the explosive power of God. What Jesus did at the cross released a shock wave that continues to circle the globe. It continues to detonate in human hearts and shake them to the core. What is that explosive power? It is the power of sacrifice.

As God, Jesus had all power, all glory, every privilege and advantage...and he gave it all up. He laid it all aside. He was the one person in all of history without a single foolish moment, and was the only person who deserved to be rewarded by his Father. Yet he was the one who was crushed. He was the one sentenced and punished for our foolishness. And when a person realizes what Jesus' sacrifice saves them from, and how huge it really was, that's the dynamite that blows the doors off the prison.

Even if you feel like you've heard this a million times, think again about what God has done. Just see in your mind a person who means the world to you. Maybe it's your spouse or a dear friend. If you're a parent, maybe it's your child. You love them dearly and completely. Now let me ask you, would you deliberately send that person to switch places with a death row inmate? Could you voluntarily send your loved one to substitute for an convict who is scheduled to die, and will die that other person's death? It's unimaginable! But do you see? You are the death row prisoner! I am the inmate scheduled to die, and God sent his dear Son to switch places with us.

That's how much God loves you. That's how much He values you. That's the explosive power of Jesus' sacrifice for you.

What Jesus did at the cross released a shock wave that's still being felt today. The power of His sacrifice still echoes through our world. You can hear it in so many great stories: The Great Lion Aslan lying down on the Stone Table; The Hobbit Frodo Baggins bearing the One Ring to Mount Doom; Colonel Robert Gould Shaw leading the 54th Infantry into battle in the movie "Glory;" Harry Stamper's staying behind to blow up the asteroid in "Armageddon;" the rebels in "Rogue One" facing certain death to get the Death Star blueprint; I mean, I could do this all day, because at a deep level people understand there is nothing as powerful as sacrifice. You and I know that, ultimately, Jesus is the one to whom all these sacrifice stories point.

It's also why we rightly honor those who are willing to stand in harm's way for us; why we owe a debt of gratitude to those in our military and those who serve as police and firefighters and first responders. Their vocations are built on a willingness to sacrifice; their lives echo the dynamite blast of the cross.

And it's also why our lives as followers of Jesus are incomplete if that echo is not heard in our words and actions. If it has dawned on you just how much God sacrificed to obtain you, will you not be inspired to sacrifice for others? Will you not be willing to appear foolish in the eyes of the world? Will you not follow Jesus in setting aside control and glory...setting aside economic or personal advantage...setting aside popularity and approval in order to give to someone else—to help them gain the goodness of God? Are you willing to light the fuse of sacrifice in your life?

Adapted from a sermon by Rev. Ken Klaus