

A Foolish Cross and the Wisdom of God

Thomas Robinson, *Easter Sunday*, April 1, 2018

John 20:19-29

¹⁹ On the evening of that day, the **first day of the week**, although the **doors were locked** where the disciples were **for fear** of the Jewish leaders, **Jesus came** and stood among them and said to them, "**Peace to you.**" ²⁰ When he had said this, he **showed them his hands and his side**. The disciples therefore were **glad** when **they saw the Lord**.

²¹ Jesus therefore said to them again, "**Peace to you**. Just as the **Father has sent me**, even so **I am sending you.**" ²² And when he had said this, he **breathed on them** and he says to them, "**Receive the Holy Spirit.**" ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if for any you withhold, they are withheld."

²⁴ Now **Thomas**, one of the twelve, called the Twin (Didymus), was **not with them** when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples were telling him, "We have seen the Lord."

But he said to them, "**Unless I see** in his hands the mark of the nails, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, **I will never believe!**"

²⁶ Eight days later, again his disciples were inside and Thomas with them. Jesus comes, although the doors have been **locked**, stands among them, and he said, "**Peace to you.**"

²⁷ Then he says to Thomas, "Stretch out your finger here and see my hands; and stretch out your hand and put it into my side. **Don't be faithless, but believing.**"

²⁸ Thomas answered him, "**My Lord and my God!**"

²⁹ Jesus says to him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. **Blessings on those who've not seen and yet have believed.**"

1 Corinthians 1:18-21

¹⁸ For the **message (logos) of the cross** is sheer **foolishness** to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is **God's power**. ¹⁹ For it is written, "*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the intelligent I will set aside.*" [Isa 29:14] ²⁰ Where's a wise person? Where's a scribe? Where's a debater of this age? Hasn't God turned the wisdom of the world into foolishness? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, **the world through its wisdom did not know God**, God decided through **the foolishness of the proclamation** to deliver those who believe.

Mark 15:29-32 People watching Jesus on the cross

²⁹ People passing by insulted him, wagging their heads, "Ha! So you're going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days! ³⁰ Save yourself! Get down off that cross!" ³¹ So also the chief priests joined together mocking him along with the scribes, "He saved others, but he can't save himself. ³² Let the 'Messiah,' the 'King of Israel,' get down now from the cross so that we can see it and 'believe!'" Even those who were crucified with him taunted him.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58 Resurrection: Physical life empowered by God's eternal Spirit

⁵¹ Listen! I'm telling you a mystery. Not all of us will sleep, but we all will be changed – ⁵² in an instant, the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For it will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. ⁵³ For this that's perishable must put on imperishability, and this that's dying must put on immortality. ⁵⁴ When this perishable puts on imperishability, and this that's dying puts on immortality, then the word will happen that's written, "*Death was swallowed into victory.*" [Isa 25:8] ⁵⁵ "*Where, Death, is your victory? Where, Death, is your sting?*" [Hos 13:14] ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷ But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Messiah. ⁵⁸ Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be firmly grounded, unshakable, always overflowing in the work of the Lord, since you know that in the Lord the work you do is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 15:25-26

²⁵ For Jesus must be king till he's put all enemies under his feet. ²⁶ Death is the last enemy destroyed.

Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ Think this among yourselves, which also means in Messiah Jesus: ⁶ "Though he was in the form of God, | he did not consider that equality with God | a thing to be exploited, | ⁷ rather he emptied himself, | by taking the form of a slave, | being born in human likeness. | ⁸ And being found in human shape, | he humbled himself | by becoming obedient to the point of death, | even death on a cross. | ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him | and graced him with the name | that is above every name, | ¹⁰ so that at Jesus' name | every knee should bow, | of all in heaven and on earth and under earth, | ¹¹ and every tongue confess | that "Jesus Messiah is LORD," | to the glory of God the Father."

Seeing the Fool ... Not Being a Fool

April 1. When people walked by Jesus being crucified, they saw the perfect fool. He imagined he was king, savior, Messiah. Now look! Crucified. A clear, humiliating refutation. His disciples felt they were fools too. "*We had hoped...*" (Lk 24:21). But then, the women, that empty tomb! Now, Jesus was there among the fearful, locked-in disciples. Shalom. The wounds. New mission. New breath of creation. Sharing Jesus' work. But Thomas was missing. The others tell him, but he's been a fool once. Not again! "*Unless I see... I'll never believe.*" Believe what? He's followed Jesus. He's dealt with Jesus' death. Hard but understandable. I was fooled. But this would be the end of that world. "*Lord we don't know where you're going...*" "*I am the way...*" (Jn 14:5-6) Jesus graciously gives all he asks. Thomas realizes what it means. Everything is different. New reality, God has died and been raised: "My Lord and my God!"

The Wisdom and Power of God

The foolishness has never gone away. Paul experienced it in himself and every city. We sanitize the cross and spiritualize the resurrection. Refuse to believe: Snuff flick. Pie in the sky. Yet then & now, if you really see the cross & resurrection, you too know that nothing's the same. Jesus' resurrection reveals the union of heaven and earth, physical and spiritual – unsettling! The ancient world often saw physical as transitory, bad; the soul alone as immortal, good. Many Christian also seek release from the physical body into a disembodied, cloudy heaven. Many moderns are physicalists: no soul or spirit, only the material body. Death is our end. Resurrection unsettles both. It's not ethereal but very physical, earthy. Jesus cooks breakfast. Transformed physical. It stands in line with God as creator of the very good physical world. God empowering humans in a sharp-edged, changeable world. God choosing incarnation. The cross is the bottom of physical. Pain, humiliation, real death. Jesus goes all the way down. Far weaker, uglier than God should be. More loving, gracious. Stronger, beautiful with wounds. God gives neither escape from the physical into a bodiless, spiritual life, nor an entirely physical world winding down in cosmic death. God is creator & new creator. In Jesus, he reveals evil, injustice, corruption, death as the real fools. Power, wisdom, grace are in his resurrection life.

Living in the World of God's Death and Resurrection

We live in that world. A Grand Unified Vision! Can we see, believe, trust it? Everything physical is united with everything spiritual in Jesus – "*on earth as in heaven.*" Everything we do matters. We shape a future that either moves toward God's new creation or tries to thwart it. In our work, relationships, recreation, politics, worship, live toward that life. Build for it. Celebrate Resurrection. Create something new. New service, justice, understanding, forgiveness, art, hope, science, music, reconciliation, barrier-breaking. Jesus is risen! Live resurrection life!