

[Story] Three fools died and are at the pearly gates of heaven. St. Peter tells them that they can enter the gates if they can answer one simple question. St. Peter asks the first fool, “What is Easter?” He replies, “Oh, that’s easy! It’s the holiday in November when everyone gets together, eats turkey, and are thankful...” “Wrong!,” replies St. Peter, and proceeds to ask the second fool the same question, “What is Easter?” The second one replies, “Easter is the holiday in December when we put up a nice tree, exchange presents, and celebrate the birth of Jesus.” St. Peter looks at the second fool, shakes his head in disgust, tells her she’s wrong, and then peers over his glasses at the third fool and asks, “What is Easter?” The third fool smiles confidently and looks St. Peter in the eyes, “I know what Easter is.” “Oh?” says St. Peter, incredulously. “Easter is the Christian holiday that coincides with the Jewish celebration of Passover. Jesus and his disciples were eating at the last supper and Jesus was later deceived and turned over to the Romans by one of his disciples. The Romans took him to be crucified and he was stabbed in the side, made to wear a crown of thorns, and was hung on a cross with nails through his hands. He was buried in a nearby cave which was sealed off by a large rock.” St. Peter smiles broadly with delight. Then he continues, “Every year this big rock is moved aside so that Jesus can come out...and, if He sees His shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter.”

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To those who have no faith in Jesus Christ, Easter, the message of the cross, is a good joke for April Fool’s Day. However, to those who have Jesus as the Lord and Savior it is not. This foolish message of the cross to the unbelievers is the basis for the unity of Christian community. For this, a question arises here: *Why does God use the foolish message of the cross?* In these eight verses of today’s reading, 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Paul answers. God uses the foolish message of the cross to show forth His wisdom and power. In other words, God “fools” us to show Himself wise and powerful.

Paul makes it clear in today’s reading that there are only two categories of people: the “perishing” and the “saved.” Yes, here in the United Methodist Church we believe in the prevenient grace—the grace that precedes human action before believing or accepting God’s grace through Jesus Christ. Yes, God loves everyone

regardless we believe in Jesus Christ or not. Ultimately, however, at the end all must fall into one of these two classes—to have faith in Christ or not. There is no other. For those who are not sure about the faith in Christ yet, I am offering my prayers for you. I pray that on this resurrection day the Holy Spirit convicts your heart to believe. Paul writes that those who are perishing or not believing in Christ consider the word of the cross “foolishness.” Five times in eight verses, Paul uses a form of the word “foolishness.”

Now, it might be helpful to know the basic Greek word *moria*. In verse 25, it appears as an adjective—*moros*. I probably don’t have to tell you that we get the English word “moron” from this Greek word. It has the idea of something that is ridiculous, ignorant, stupid, and contemptible. If someone were to say, “You moron!” you would be insulted, and properly so. But that is the very word that Paul uses here—and not just once, but five times.

What Paul is saying is this: Most people consider the cross to be moronic! Now there are countless reasons for this, but at the top of the list has to be that the cross offends our pride. The word of the cross is that salvation is freely granted by God’s grace, not human merit or intellect. Furthermore, salvation is extended to all people. This levels the ground at the foot of the cross. Everyone comes to God through faith, based upon the work of Jesus Christ. This offends man’s pride.

While the unbeliever considers the cross utter nonsense, the Christian sees it as “the power of God.” This power of God is displayed through that men consider weakness, and the “foolishness of God” turns out to be smarter than the wisdom of this world. The message of the cross is not simply a good advice or helpful information. It is the power of God (1:18b)! In other words, our victory in salvation and life can only be attained through the cross. The cross is everything to the followers of Jesus Christ because the message of the cross ends with the empty tomb—the risen Christ!

Through this risen Christ, we are here to partake the communion at this table. At this table all are welcome. At this table, the “foolishness of God” humbles all of us to welcome others as God does. At this table, this risen Christ gives hope to those who are mired in despair, who feel hopeless, and who have given up all hope. At this table, a new life in Christ is given to us. So, today we remember the “foolishness of God” at this table by breaking the bread and share the cup of the new covenant together...*Consecration of the Lord’s Table!*