



# CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Easter 2018

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## **It Sounds Foolish...But it's Amazing!**

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I love the story of Darryl's honest journey to genuine faith in Jesus Christ. I'm going to ask you to tuck that story away, just for a minute, and I want to get back to Darryl right before we conclude our time together. I want to start by saying welcome, especially to all of you who are guests today. You're friends and family, possibly, from out of town, or maybe it has just been a while since you've been together with the people you're here with, so welcome to you! We're glad you're here.

I don't know if I have to tell you this. I don't know if you know this or not, but today is April Fool's Day. Isn't that interesting? When I realized that a couple of weeks ago, I started wracking my brain to see if I could remember if that has ever happened before. I've been a pastor for over 33 years, and I just never remembered that being the case on Easter Sunday, so I looked it up, and there was a reason why I couldn't remember. The last time this happened was in 1956, which was before I was born, and it has only happened three other times since 1900.

I'm not sure why in the world I'm telling you all that, but I suppose that for a lot of unbelievers, this is a gold mine for poking fun at Christians today. It is just a gold mine for poking fun at people who actually believe the craziness of this resurrection story of Jesus Christ, isn't it? Christians, if we're all honest today, I think it's okay for us to admit that it does sound a little foolish, doesn't it?

Think about it. Just think about it. The execution of a lowly carpenter's-son-turned-preacher who, oh yeah, just happens to be the Son of God, who dies and then in three days rises from the dead again and appears to just a few of his faithful followers, commanding them to go and tell everybody and anyone he's alive, and then promise that if they believe it they'll have their sins forgiven and they'll live forever... Really? Here we are, 2,000 years and millions of believers later, and it still sounds a little ridiculous if we're honest, doesn't it? It's okay for us to admit that.

What's amazing about this is that the Bible actually acknowledges how crazy it sounds. What if I were to tell you that the Bible teaches that from the very beginning, God actually planned that the salvation of our souls and the forgiveness of our sins would sound like fake news? It would

actually be offensive to the wisdom of the world, this whole resurrection thing, but that's exactly what the Bible teaches.

In fact, I'm going to ask you to open your Bibles to a place called 1 Corinthians, chapter 1. If you are without a Bible this morning, that's okay. We have Bibles all around you, underneath the seats close by, in front of you. If you want to just grab one and lay your eyes on this, that'd be great. I'd love for you to see it for yourselves. Don't take my word for it. The Bible actually says these things.

The context of what we're about to look at is a letter that the apostle Paul wrote to a church, a church that was in the city of Corinth, which had some people in the church who probably, due to a lot of ridicule from friends, family, or whatever... Their resolve to trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life was beginning to weaken, and so Paul writes this church a letter to encourage the believers' faith about this whole thing we're here to celebrate today.

We have that very letter in our hands right now, so if you have it and you're ready to go, let's stand for the reading of God's Word. That's our tradition here. We always stand when we read the passage for the day because we actually believe this is the Word of God and we should stand out of respect, awe, and actually anticipation that he is going to speak to us right now. I'm going to pick it up in verse 18. We're just going to read a small portion of this encouraging section of this letter and we'll get to more of it as we move along.

**"For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.' Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe."**

Father in heaven, my prayer for us now is just very simple. God, I pray that when we leave here today, we will leave here with more faith in Jesus than we ever thought possible. God, I ask that for all of us, that you would just open our eyes, ears, and hearts to the majesty of this truth, the majesty of Easter. I pray this in the name of your risen Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ, amen.

Stare at these verses, just for a couple more minutes. I want you to see some terms here. Let's define the terms. Paul starts out by saying, **"For the word of the cross is folly..."** or foolish. That little phrase, "the word of the cross," stands for the gospel, or the good news of Christianity that includes the substitutionary death of Jesus for the forgiveness of sins as well as the resurrection of Jesus for eternal life. That's what is included in that phrase, "the word of the cross."

He talks about a group of people. He calls them "those who are perishing." He's referring to those who refuse to believe it. He has another group there to whom he's talking, "those who are being saved," which of course refers to those who actually do believe it. With those terms

defined and understood, I think it'll make more sense as Paul says here openly that it sounds foolish, but what makes it amazing is that...

1. *God's power is greater than man's approval.* That's what he's saying here. God's power is infinitely greater than man's opinion. You know, God never worries about his popularity polls. He never worries about his approval ratings. He's not influenced or affected by them in the very least. Paul acknowledges right here as he writes this letter how foolish this all sounds to unbelievers, but he says to this church,

"Don't worry about that. Don't let that shake your faith. All that matters is that the word of the cross is effective and it is true because the power of almighty God stands behind it, not because it makes sense in the minds of unbelievers. Don't let it rattle you that it sounds so crazy. There's no other human ability or power to save ourselves from sin's condemnation and the eternal punishment that will come upon it. Yeah, it sounds foolish because God's power is greater than any opinion or approval of man."

2. *God's power is greater than man's wisdom.* We read, in verse 19, where Paul reminds us that all the way back in the Old Testament, in the book of Isaiah, chapter 29, God said to Isaiah that his plan of salvation would be a plan that man could never, ever take credit for. All the way back in Isaiah 29, verse 14, God tells the prophet,

"When the time comes for my plan of redemption for the souls of man to unfold, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and I will destroy the discernment of the discerning. When the time comes and my plan for the salvation of your souls is unveiled, I will literally destroy all conventional wisdom man has."

Why in the world would God make sure to do that? Why is he committed to doing that? I'll tell you why. It's because at the core of the wisdom of man is this pesky little thing called pride. See, pride is that part in us, that brazen refusal to admit there is a God to whom we are all ultimately accountable.

Pride is that natural bent inside of us that always points us toward ourselves, that makes us actually say, "God, look at me! Look what I can do! Look what I've accomplished! Look what I know and understand." Pride is that part of us in every human heart that actually thinks when we stand before God in the judgment, we're going to look at God and say, "God, are you impressed?" That's what pride does. Pride actually thinks we're going to stand before God and God is going to be in awe of us. That's how sick pride is. That's what it does to the soul.

Yet faith in the crucified and resurrected Jesus is death to our pride as well as the giving up of all grounds for boasting before God. The apostle Paul writes, in the same section of this letter of encouragement, **"For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men...so that no human being might boast in the presence of God...as it is written, 'Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.'"** You see, God is absolutely committed to not allow us to determine the way of our own salvation.

He is absolutely committed to that, and I am so grateful. Could you imagine if heaven was an eternity filled with people bragging about how they got themselves to heaven? Could you imagine if heaven was an eternity of years of all of us who are going to heaven just boasting about how we figured it out?

That'd be a nightmare. That sounds more like what hell is going to be like, not what heaven is going to be like. Right? God loved us too much to leave it up to us. We would ruin everything if it was up to us. The only bragging in heaven that's ever going to happen will be about his power and his wisdom.

3. *God is pleased to offer salvation to you and me.* The key that unlocks the door for our forgiveness, the door of our salvation, is humility. It can't be earned. We will never get ourselves to the point where we will deserve God's forgiveness or the salvation of our souls. It can only be humbly received as God's gift to us. I think this is what will make all the so-called smart people of the world look foolish in the end. Those who dare to think they're going to stand before God and say, "God, I got this covered. See what I did?" That's not going to happen.

Paul writes, "**...it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles...**" Paul is writing them, saying, "I've heard there's a group of people running around demanding more evidence."

Paul, in that day, was referring to the Jewish people who were kind of mocking the Christians. I suppose there are even still Jews today who do the same, who want more evidence. "If you're going to convince me of this whole Jesus thing, you have to convince me that he is who he says he is."

Paul says, "Don't worry about that. Jesus has already walked on water. He has made crippled people walk, deaf people hear, and blind people see. Demon-possessed people have been delivered. He has fed thousands of people with a couple of Happy Meals. He has calmed a storm. He has made dead people come back to life! There's no shortage of evidence."

Paul says, "I know there's another group of people..." He calls them the Gentiles or the Greeks. Basically, it's everyone who's not Jewish. He says, "There's a whole other group of people who are just running around saying, 'I want more enlightenment here. I want more wisdom. I want to know what Jesus knows. I want to know if he knows as much as we know about the world and stuff.'"

The truth was that his teaching was with such divine wisdom and authority that no one was ever able to prove one single syllable that Jesus ever said or taught as untrue, wrong, or false. Not one person since Jesus walked this earth has ever, one time, proven that anything he has said was wrong about topics such as science, philosophy, history, logic, human relationships, government, finances, forgiveness, love, heaven, hell, or God.

Every single thing Jesus ever said and taught about any of those topics has been absolutely, 100 percent true. Not one syllable of history has proven him wrong. Yet I suppose there have been people in every single service this Easter, at least here at Canyon Hills... I suppose there are even people sitting here right now who are feeling this.

You're saying, "Yeah, I get all that, Steve. I get that. Yeah, yeah, yeah. The miracles... Yeah, I get that, but for me to believe, it's going to take him showing up personally. If he attends this service, then I'll believe. I need to see him with my own eyes." Do you really think you would? I would say no, you wouldn't. I would say that because if you still don't believe based on everything he has already done and everything he has already said, then why do you think you would believe then? Why?

I'm guessing if Jesus showed up today in downtown Mill Creek, on Easter Sunday, the response to Jesus would be very similar to how the crowds responded to Jesus when he rode into Jerusalem on a donkey that day. I think, if he showed up in downtown Mill Creek today, this afternoon, there'd be a small crowd of his followers who would be really excited to see him, but then the rest of the massiveness of the crowd would really want nothing to do with him at all, even if he was standing there in person.

It sounds crazy, but Easter is not about Jesus impressing us enough. Easter is about God's gracious and merciful gift to those who humbly believe in the word of his cross. In verse 26, Paul continues to encourage them. He says to Christians, "**...consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.**"

Paul is reminding them, but ultimately reminding us that God's love and forgiveness is for those whom the world doesn't consider very smart, powerful, or influential at all. He's saying God loves, saves, and forgives those who the world thinks don't deserve it. The world looks at them and says, "You're not privileged enough. You're not popular enough. You're not significant or successful enough."

See, when it comes to the forgiveness of our sins and the salvation of our souls, there's no such thing as the haves and the have-nots. We're all the have-nots at the foot of the cross, right? Paul keeps writing along this same vein. He says, "**But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are...**"

Look at that now. Three times, Paul reminds us, "God chose you. He chose you, Christian, and he doesn't care one iota what the world says or thinks about you. He chose you. When everybody else in the world gives up on you, he never gives up on you." In God's infinite wisdom, he would not allow the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus, to be exploited or franchised by those who take advantage of the less-advantaged in this world.

In the end, Easter reminds us that God has fulfilled his divine plan to save broken and humble sinners from eternal death and punishment. That's what it boils down to, you guys. Easter is God's reminder that he has solved the riddle. He has done everything necessary. For us who believe, it's about the power of God unleashed in the death and resurrection of his Son, Jesus Christ, to save us. When Jesus was at his weakest in agony in the cross and in the darkness and loneliness of the tomb, God was at his absolute strongest.

Paul wraps up his encouragement by saying of God, "**And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption...**" Look at that one sentence, would you? In that one sentence is packed more theology about God than perhaps in whole chapters elsewhere in the Bible.

He's saying, "Because of God and your faith in Jesus, you have the loving wisdom of God." That's all you need. All the brilliance of man in the world combined has no power to save you from your sin and to give you eternal life and conquer death. He says, "Because of your faith in Jesus, you have his righteousness." By putting your faith in Jesus, all of our sins have been removed forever and we have been declared legally righteous by God.

He says, "Because of your faith in Jesus, you have his sanctification." That's kind of just a fancy way of saying you have been made holy and now you are set apart as God's adopted sons and daughters through faith in his resurrected Son, Jesus. Then he says, "Because of God and your faith in Jesus, you have redemption." Your soul has been purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ and "Paid in full" is written across your soul. That's what he's saying to us today.

You see, this life of faith in Jesus that we live is not about what we can do to make ourselves worthy of his acceptance. That's not how we live now. No, this life we live by faith in Jesus is about trusting in what he has done to make us worthy of his acceptance. It's what he has done. There are too many people in this world running around thinking that in order to get to God or in order to get from what God what we need (forgiveness, eternal life, or whatever it is we're searching for)...

There are too many people running around thinking you spell that D-O, do. "What do I have to do? God, what do I have to do to impress you? What do I have to do to convince you. God, what do I have to do to get you on my side?" No, you don't spell it D-O. You spell it D-O-N-E. God has done what no man can do. He has literally lifted the infinite weight of our sin and condemnations off the backs of those who believe in his Son, Jesus Christ. That's what he has done.

Do you remember Darryl, in the video? Talk about crazy! Talk about the world listening to a story like that and saying, "That might be the most foolish thing I've ever heard, to walk away from all that." I get that. Darryl gets it. I wonder if some of you sitting here right now can relate to Darryl, just a little bit.

It might not be the same path, but I wonder if you can relate to the chase, to the search, thinking, counting on, and hoping in yourself, in other people, in stuff, or in success, achievement, or

whatever it is you feel like you just don't have yet, but when you get it for sure... Then, as you get closer and closer to it, you realize everything you're hoping it's going to bring isn't there. You can relate to Darryl.

I know it sounds crazy, but Jesus died for you and rose from the dead so you can give up the chase. It doesn't work. It was never meant to work. Nothing in this world or in this life was ever meant to provide what it is you're looking for. You may think right now, "Well, I think I found it!" Just wait a week and the search begins again.

He died so you can have the hope and peace with God the world can never take away. It's why Jesus and only Jesus could say, **"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die."** Well, if there's one person in the universe who could say that, it's him. He's alive!

Would you just bow your head, just for a minute right now, and just be very quiet and respectful of those around you? Just bow your head and close your eyes. I know many of you sitting in this room today, when you arrived at this service, you arrived already believing. Today, your faith is just confirmed. The flames of your joy have been stoked a little bit. The roots of your faith just run a little deeper now.

Yet there are others of you in this room where, when you showed up today, you weren't really sure. It's not coincidence. It's no accident that you're here right now. God wanted you to hear one more time that he loves you and he invites you to repent of your unbelief, to come to Jesus by faith, and to believe, not because it makes sense to an unbelieving world but because it is the power of God to save you. He invites you right now to believe.

O God, we know you have raised the Lord Jesus and you will raise us also with him and bring us with him into your presence forever one day. God, I praise you for those in this room who arrived already knowing, secure in their faith, who they are because of Jesus.

Yet God, I praise you for those in this room who, right now, were wondering if there would be anything said that would make sense and convince them that you are for real and that you love them and have done everything necessary for them to have life, peace, forgiveness, worth, value, significance, joy, and contentment, knowing you have taken away their sin and all their failure.

O God, I thank you that they're here today. I pray you would turn their doubt, fear, and skepticism now... God, give them courage to believe by your mercy. I pray this in the name of Jesus, amen.

These people who are standing up here right now just dropped down out of heaven. They literally just landed. The reason they're here is because they believe, as I do as well, that some of you are sitting here right now thinking, "Okay. I don't have it all figured out. It doesn't all make perfect sense, but I'm ready to take the next step. I want to believe. What do I do next? How do I take that next step toward putting my faith and trust in Jesus?"

That's exactly why they're standing here. I want to invite you, before you leave this room, to just walk up to one of them and say, "I'm ready. I want to take the next step. I believe. What do I do?" They want to give you something to go home with. If you want them to, they'll even pray for you. Whatever you want.

They want to help you take that right step toward putting your trust and faith in Jesus Christ. If you're ready to do that, don't leave without coming up here and saying, "Okay, that's me. I can't explain everything, but I know enough now where he is worthy of all of my trust." If that is you, come as soon as we're dismissed.

For the rest of you, God bless you. I hope this is the best Easter of your life. I hope you go home right now and eat tons of lasagna and just enjoy the rest of the day. Hopefully, we'll see each other again next Sunday. God bless you. Have a great Easter.