

The Cast|People Engaged in the Story of Jesus Christ

The Jester

Psalm 2.1-7; John 20.6-16; 1st Corinthians 2.6-9; 3.19-20
 April 1, 2018 (Easter)

(Psalm 2.1-7) Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!" ⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs, the Lord scoffs at them. ⁵ Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying, ⁶ "But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain." ⁷ "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.

(John 20.6-16) And so Simon Peter also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he saw the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself. ⁸ So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw and believed. ⁹ For as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. ¹⁰ So the disciples went away again to their own homes. ¹¹ But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; ¹² and she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³ And they said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him." ¹⁴ When she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. ¹⁵ Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, "Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away." ¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, Teacher).

(1 Cor 2 & 3) Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; ⁷ but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; ⁸ the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory... For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness"; ²⁰ and again, "The Lord knows the reasonings of the wise, that they are useless."

Since Christmas, we've been looking at the minor characters, the "supporting cast" in the Four Gospels ...Every time these people connect with the Main Character...we learn something about them but...our AIM has always been to learn more about the Man at the center of the Story.

Today...after some 50 sermons we finally come to the Main Character. In recognition of this special day (April 1st) ...we're calling Him, "The Jester"... Jesus Christ... the April Fool.

You might ask, "Shouldn't this be an Easter sermon and not an April Fool's sermon? This is a church NOT a comedy club?!" Well I work here and I can tell you: it's both!

And the Gospel...in fact the whole Bible (as Dr. Warren Gage taught us in his seminar last year) the Bible is NOT in the category of tragedy but of comedy... That's NOT to say it's meant to make us laugh but that it goes from low to high...It starts with a catastrophe...and it ends in a wedding...a love story.

Today we look at three passages that sort of bring the whole story together... a cosmic problem/revolt and then a fix...a very unlikely solution that's so foolish...it's almost absurd...and finally the application: how to appropriate the solution.

Let's look at: 1) Cosmic Revolt 2) Comic Revenge and 3) Kingdom Reason – what it means to believe the Jester

The Second Psalm reduces the whole Bible to one short poem. It picks up the Babel Theme where people build a tower to heaven and try to find satisfaction, security and significance OUTSIDE of God... It begins with an epic question: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples devise a vain thing?"

The writer poses the question because he's genuinely perplexed, like, "I don't get it... kings and rulers are people who should KNOW BETTER...are attempting to do something that's doomed to fail... It's absurd! It's like selling 'dehydrated water'...it can't possibly succeed because it's utterly ridiculous! WHY, O WHY?"

It's a plot to revolt against the existence of God ...against the rule/kingdom of God... It's a denial of what IS...like disregarding the law of gravity...and the writer doesn't get it! "The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Messiah, saying, 'Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!'

It's like the Tower of Babel...trying to build a tower to get us into a place where we can be the Air-Traffic Controllers for the whole world...and can base our lives on radical autonomy and self-determination and "then we can disregard this outmoded superstition called 'G – O – D'...we can take charge of our own destiny!"

This poem sort of diagnoses ON A COSMIC SCALE what each of us faces on a personal scale: why do we DO what we DO? Why do the nations rage...and why do I? Why do I seek autonomy FROM God when, in reality, true freedom is only found IN God? Why do I seek security, significance and satisfaction like a whale that insists on living in the desert? It's not freedom – it's absurd and grotesque...But I want it! Why do we rage?

And what will God DO in response to this threat? Will He wring His hands? Will He frantically negotiate some sort of treaty...or a deal...or compromise?

No. "He who sits in the heavens laughs, the LORD scoffs at them..." It's NOT that He's maniacal/sinister but that He is un-worried...totally unthreatened at this absurdity... HE HAS A COUNTER-PLAN: a King He plans to install... a Son He plans to reveal.

And so He comes...but when He arrives...this incarnation of God is disguised. He's a comedic-hero who goes unrecognized (like the Undercover Boss).

He masquerades ...and He plays the Fool... He comes as a Jester who speaks truth to power but with total freedom and impunity. Humanity is become absurd so God's King will be a kind of Comic Figure who speaks in riddles and parables... Who says about King Herod, "You tell that fox!" (Lk 13.22) (Like the court jester who is given total license to say whatever he wants).

He comes as "Lord of the Dance". He says to the rulers, "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance" (Luke 7.32). At times He seems clueless of how things work in this world...and turns things upside-down again and again (or is He turning them right-side UP?). He disregards social status and even seems oblivious to things like time...customs...He's like a Jester...like a Fool!

Remember He met that important man with the urgent need – a ruler of a synagogue whose daughter was about to die and begs the Jester's help. His 12-year-old daughter is dying!

And the disciples get it – they know how things work and they probably thought, "Ah-HA! Finally someone important is recognizing us ...Lord, this is the break we've been waiting for! Go with this Jairus and hurry because Jairus is important and can help us!"

And as they go this nameless woman...poor and with a sickness that's rendered her unclean for 12 years...I mean there's no rush...what's a few days more? But she touches the Jester and is healed...and He stops everything to commend her and applaud her faith...He lingers!

And time is wasting and the important man, Jairus, is gonna JUMP out of his skin, "Why are we waiting for this woman 12 years sick when my little girl only twelve years old is dying...is this Man a Fool?"

Then, as this Joker is wasting time with this silly woman and her faith... (quote) "While He was still speaking, they came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, 'Your daughter has died; why trouble the Teacher anymore?'"

And the Jester says to the important man, the devastated dad, "Pssst! Don't be afraid only believe."

"Are YOU kidding me? Is this a joke? My daughter just died!" Then they arrive at the house and it's in an uproar ("Why are the nations in an uproar?") and this Fool has the nerve to ask, "Why make a commotion and weep? The child hasn't died, she's asleep."

QUOTE: "They began laughing at Him." (Mark 5.40) What is this guy a clown? Who does He think He is?

"But taking the child by the hand, He said to her, 'Talitha kum!' (which translated means, 'Little girl, I say to you, get up!'). Immediately the girl got up and began to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astounded."

He is unconcerned with social status...with important people...with the passing of time...with the words we all dread more than any words, "She's dead – it's too late!"... He who sits in the heavens laughs!

And time will fail me if I survey the life and words of this Main Character...how often His words and deeds strike us as a kind of joke! His inaugural speech begins with a series of absurdities, "Happy are the sad...rich are the poor!" (see also James 1.9-10)

He rides on a donkey...He's the April Fool... and He turns the trickery of the world and the deceit of this cosmic rebellion back on us... "He is the one who catches the wise in their craftiness..."

He uses death to UNDO death...because there IS (as they say in Narnia) a "deeper magic": "the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory..." (1 Cor 2.8)

When they go to the tomb...the Body of the Jester is gone and ...Is it another riddle? They look in and find that He seems to have come right through the linen sheet... and the face-cloth is neatly rolled up and put to the side... It's like the Jester took off His mask.

But He has more tricks up His sleeve...Mary Magdalene hears a voice, "she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?' Supposing Him to be the gardener, she said to Him, 'Sir, if you have carried Him away, tell me where you have laid Him, and I will take Him away.'" Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means, my Teacher).

She thought He was the gardener...as if He was disguised AND YET He really is THE Gardener (cap. "G") He's the New Adam who will take up the task squandered by the first Adam – He will eventually rid the world of thorns and thistles and turn the wastelands into a cultivated garden... He will be the start of a new humanity...He is Firstborn from the dead.

And this MEANS that the foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of men. It means that to believe the Jester is to adopt Kingdom Reasoning... “a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away...” The infinite, eternal, unchangeable Spirit, GOD, has become physical and has made an incursion into time and space.

He came to us incognito, in Jesus Christ, the Jester. He came to us in weakness and in masquerade to shield us from the blinding light of His face (Rev. 1.16) ... and IN Jesus Christ, God has settled the score for everyone who wants forgiveness, new life, true freedom, purpose, significance, security and satisfaction...

Jesus Christ lived the life I was required to live but I didn't (He lived it IN MY PLACE) and He died the death that my sin deserves (He died IN MY PLACE).

His resurrection proves that a King has been installed on planet earth. In time He will render all governments obsolete and He will reign in an eternal and perfect rule... Christians have various opinions on how it will come to pass but we all agree that it will come to pass...we've seen what it looks like: we've seen the world to come personified in one Person... Right now we live in this wonderful and sort of absurd twilight, between the ages...the New World has appeared...but not fully dawned.

But you're NOT saying that a dead man actually came back to life in some sort of indestructible Body are YOU?... Well, yes we are. It's NOT merely a symbol or metaphor; it's history. Look into it...because IF it really happened, it changes everything! That's the new logic -- the Kingdom Reasoning that enables us to live with humility and with confidence... It enables us to admit our wrongs.

It enables us to laugh at ourselves because the Jester has had the last laugh... Jesus Christ has exposed our absurd rebellion, has become our atoning sacrifice and has risen proving that all who trust Him are forgiven... still sinful (far from perfect) but counted righteous in God's sight... and the Jester has made a mockery of our great enemy – “O death, where is your sting? O death where is your victory?...You've been defeated by the April Fool.”

And He says to all who trust Him...like that distraught father, Jairus: “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades... Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.” (Rev 1.17-18; Luk 12.32)

Only believe.