

WELCOME TO GOOFY-TOWN
Maundy Thursday Communion Meditation 7:00 p.m.
Matthew 26: 59-68; 27: 11-23; 27: 27-31
The Church of the Covenant

Several times as a pastor I have watched as normal, regular Christians, people of God, rational, respectable, high-minded, reasonable, educated, people of right mind and right thinking turn into an unfortunate mob, little better than a lynch mob. I love Bart Simpson cartoons and invariably in about every third or fourth episode the townspeople of Springfield gather up their pitchforks, clubs and torches and go after someone, often poor old Homer Simpson. It is of course a biting commentary, as is much of the Simpsons, on people and modern day life. People, even Christians, on a bad day can revert to mob-like behaviors. I call it "Goofy-town". And if you've ever been in the crosshairs of Goofy-Town you know there is no reasoning with it; it is irrational. There is no attempting to explain it, it is out of control; it is not reasonable, it is emotional; there is no stopping it, it is a force unleashed in the human spirit and in groups of people that is quite ugly and will consume whatever it happens to focus on. Jesus on Holy Week was the focus of Goofy-Town. Jesus, Son of God, Messiah –WELCOME TO GOOFY-TOWN!

Jesus did great acts of healing, acts of kindness, and taught about love. But Goofy-Town decided He was a threat to the established order. He preached love but the lynch mob that was the Pharisees, Sadducees, High Priests all sought His death. The very people who knew their Bible best sought to kill the Son of God. That's goofy. The very people who knew the scriptures best saw Jesus fulfilling prophecy, down to chapter and verse, but decided He was not the Messiah but He was a blasphemer. That's goofy. The very people who watched Him do miracle after miracle decided He did those miracles not by the power of God, but by the power of Beelzebub, the evil one. That's goofy.

The crowd ran after Jesus on Palm Sunday, hailing Him as Messiah; the same crowd, with blood lust in their heart, cried out "*Crucify Him, Crucify Him, Crucify Him!*" on Good Friday. That's goofy. The people whom He had healed, the people whom He had taught the deepest things about God, the people whom He had been with and taught and visited, these very people turned on Him on Holy Week. Welcome to Goofy-Town, Jesus. The Holy Son of God came to reclaim the Holy Temple in the Holy City and make the people Holy, but the people of God rejected their Messiah when they had proof positive evidence of exactly who He was and is. That's goofy. The people had a choice between Jesus, the Prince of Peace, and Barabbas, Barabbas being a highwayman, a killer and a revolutionary Zealot, but the people chose Barabbas, not Jesus to be released. The people chose a murderer, not Jesus. That's goofy. As Jesus is saying from the cross, "*Father, forgive them, they know not what they do*"; the people are mocking Him and spitting on Him and saying –"*If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.*" That's goofy.

He is brought before the Sanhedrin, the elders of Israel, at a time when it was illegal for them to meet, on trumped up charges that they couldn't prove but convicted Him anyway. That's goofy. The chief priest rends his garment and in a way that a chief priest should never do, indicating blasphemy, but not the blasphemy of Jesus, actually it points out the blasphemy of the High Priest. That's goofy. Pontius Pilate says Jesus is innocent, but is afraid of the mob, so sentences Jesus to death anyway. That's goofy. The soldiers take Jesus and put a royal robe about His shoulders and plait a crown of thorns to place upon His head and say, "*Hail, King of the Jews!*". Exactly who He is they use as mockery against Him.

The Son of God comes to the people of God in the City of God but the people of God nail the Son of God to the cross. That's goofy. The people who should have known better kill their Messiah. That's goofy. Jesus has come to bring them life but they nail Him to the cross and bring Him death. That's goofy. The

Lord of Love has come preaching the Gospel but He receives reproach, condemnation, mockery and ultimately death for His efforts. That's goofy.

We have heard the story so often we almost think it makes sense. It unfolds as it should. Well, of course, Jesus has to die for our sins and will have the people of God turn on Him and reject Him and despise Him. That's the way the familiar story goes. No, beloved, that's not reasonable and its not rational and its not the way it should have happened at all. We should have realized who He was and is and we should have accepted and loved and worshipped Him and hailed Him as Messiah, Lord and King. But we didn't. We turned our back on Him. We rejected Him. We mocked Him. We spat on the love God sent into the world. When all else failed to keep Him from what God had appointed Him to do, we finally nailed Him to a cross, thinking that would finally silence the Word of God, coming into the world, designed to save the people of God from themselves. Jesus, WELCOME TO GOOFY-TOWN.

I have often mused and wondered if I would have somehow been above the fray on Holy Week, if I would not have been caught up in the irrationality of it all, or if I would have been there yelling "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!" Would I have gotten sucked into Goofy Town or would I have realized who Jesus truly was? Would I have been for Him on Palm Sunday and against Him on Good Friday? Would my sinful nature have run amuck, would my irrational need for bloodlust got the better of me, would I have gone with the crowd or held my own as a person of faith, would I have been part of the lynch mob in the middle of Goofy-Town? In the middle of Holy Week? Would I have demanded that Jesus go to the cross and would I have nailed Him there? My conclusion is that I probably would not have been above the fray but right in the thick of it. We professional "religious types" didn't fare so well on Holy Week, did we? Pharisees and Sadducees and High Priests were in the forefront of the lynch mob that killed Jesus. The basest of the human spirit run amuck held sway in the heart of the highly educated religious establishment on Holy Week. But before you, as the people of God, get a little too smug and point the finger at the religious leaders who should have recognized Jesus but didn't, the people of God also were in the forefront of the condemnation of their Savior. They yelled the loudest –"Crucify Him!" That's the power of Goofy-Town.

Ever been to Goofy Town? Ever watched good Christian people target someone? Ever watch the bloodlust of a modern day lynch mob break out? Ever watch a good person being consumed by the criticism of other good Christian people? I have. Its not a pretty sight; its ugly. It's the worst expression of humanity. It's the basest of instincts out of control and leading to someone gonna have to pay. Someone's going to get "crucified". Can we realize we are in the midst of it when we happen to be in Goofy-Town? Can we stop ourselves from participating in the mob? Can we step back from it and take a deep breath and realize what we are doing? Can we understand that the very same thing that happened on Holy Week we can recapitulate in the here and now? Or do we get sucked into it? Does the irrationality consume us and we do and say things no good Christian should ever do or say even on their worst day? Do you think you wouldn't have gotten sucked into the mob mentality of Holy Week? Really? Or do you think the unfolding story of Holy Week is really the unfolding story of the human condition, out of control, and running wild with sin and blood lust in its heart?

The Good News about GOOFY-TOWN is that while we sometimes find ourselves there, through the love of Jesus, we don't have to LIVE there. Holy Week, Goofy-Town, ends with the vindication of the Man Goofy-Town sought to kill. It always does, beloved. There is justice after all. For God is not mocked. He is resurrected and vindicated and victorious, every time. And Amen.

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