

Dear friends,

Sometimes the calendar can produce unusual combinations of dates. For example, this year we marked the start of Lent, Ash Wednesday, on Valentine's day and we will celebrate Easter Sunday on April Fool's day. In some ways, it would make more sense to mark these the other way around – some would say that we are foolish to give things up (or take things on) during Lent. If you follow “the Archers” on Radio 4, you will know that the vicar of Ambridge has challenged his congregation to give up ‘complaining’ for Lent – and anyone who complains has to make a donation to the Lent appeal! To begin with I thought this was a very foolish suggestion – but actually it has certainly got the local folk thinking about what they are saying. Maybe not so foolish after all?

Surely it would be better to celebrate Easter Day on Valentine's day as this would enable us to proclaim to the world a very different kind of love through the death and resurrection of Jesus:

“for I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, no any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!” [Romans 8:38-39]

Unfortunately, it is currently impossible that Easter Sunday will ever fall on Valentine's day!

There is an ancient church tradition of ‘Holy Humour Sunday’ which was celebrated on the First Sunday after Easter. Some churches, it seems, tell jokes (and some even play practical jokes!) and many take the opportunity to party together. While recognising worship is a serious business, it should never be without laughter and joy. And sometimes laughter really is the best medicine after the seriousness of Lent, and the trauma of Holy Week and Good Friday, to come to Easter and be able to rejoice and celebrate and see life from the perspective of resurrection.

In some ways resurrection may seem like foolishness – some kind of cruel joke (as maybe the chief priests and Pharisees might have thought, and so ensured that the tomb was sealed, and a guard deployed so that Jesus' disciples would not steal his body and tell people he had been raised from the dead.)

I remember a conversation with a friend of mine a few years ago, who was struggling with what to preach on Easter Sunday. They suggested that Easter Sunday was the hardest Sunday to preach on, because how do you explain the resurrection? My response was, I think it's the easiest day to preach on because Easter Sunday is not the day for explanations but a day to simply celebrate that Jesus is alive. We have 364 other days to work out what that means and the implications of it for our church life and our daily lives. It is a day (and a season) to celebrate that **“the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom!”** (1 Corinthians 1v25)

May that foolishness be yours! Happy Easter!

Rachel Deigh.