

Sermon on „Fools in Christo“ / February 2023

Dear congregation!

We are now in February in the carnival season, the time of fools, which plays a big role in Germany, especially in the Rhineland but also in the southwest. For many people it is an opportunity to break out of everyday life and its conventions and to experience a special freedom, the freedom of the fool: to be different for once, to do something crazy, to dress up, to sing and dance loudly in the streets.



Historically, carnival is often explained by the strict Lent that follows. Because the church imposes special abstinence on people for seven weeks from Ash Wednesday, they are allowed to "let the sow out" (German expression for „to let their hair down") beforehand (since there is no more meat then, the butchers were allowed to slaughter the fattened sow). The Christian Church thus appears to be a party pooper, because it demands that from Ash Wednesday onwards there is an end to the freedom of fools. (In the meantime, however, many non-Christians are proposing a vegetarian way of life to save our planet!)

But actually we Christians are the true fools and not only at carnival time. Jesus teaches his disciples to break with the usual conventions and ideas of this world. That's just foolish, isn't it? Martin Luther sums it up in his time when he writes: *What seems foolish to the world becomes wise with Jesus*. For Christian wisdom is often foolishness in the eyes of the world: Love your neighbour as yourself. In worldly logic, everyone is his own neighbour. Or: Love even your enemies and those who hate and persecute you. That makes no sense according to worldly logic. That is why for 2000 years it has been said again and again that Christians are actually fools in the eyes of the world.

Our world demands that we hedge our bets and that we avoid risks. Trust is good, control is better (A sentence that supposedly goes back to Lenin.). Christians trust in a God who holds man in everything and still carries him in hard times. But can one trust in a God whom one cannot even see? Doesn't that sound foolish? Rely on others and you are abandoned, says our world. In contrast, there is the Christian experience of being held in faith when all other strands break.

A statement by the now deeply fallen former tennis star Boris Becker caught my attention the other day. After his stay in prison he said in an interview: "Without faith you are lost in prison. Only your faith can help you where all other safeguards have failed. Where you have nothing left of what you could otherwise cling to in the world: fame and reputation, influence and money ...

This foolish faith in a God who holds me and catches me is a precious gift. It gives me the freedom to dare to do something where worldly logic might even advise against it. With God's help, hatred and violence can be overcome, because God sets against the worldly logic of mistrust and retaliation the foolish logic of his comprehensive love.

Sometimes it seems like folly to give up familiar certainties. But this is precisely what God encourages us to do through Jesus. How else can faith be called trust if we dare and risk nothing at all? A current example for me is our curate Anna. She would not be with us if she herself and her church in Germany had not embarked on an experiment: releasing a curate from her own church for a year so that she could work abroad. For other churches, such a thing does not seem possible. That is why, unfortunately, there is no curate in the German congregation in London, although there was an applicant there too.

Trusting in God and that he can guide our paths, opportunities can be found. But that is why Christians are the true fools - and not just limited to a few weeks a year. The Christian wisdom of love and trust is probably still all too often folly in the eyes of the world.

However, our faith wants to protect us Christians from a real folly: That we as human beings rely only on our own powers and abilities and therefore do not need God. As human beings we are fallible and need God's mercy and forgiveness. We do not manage to free ourselves from our mistakes by our own strength. In order to see our human nature realistically, we need God's help and we need God's assistance not to despair of ourselves, but to dare a new beginning again and again with God's help. Amen.

Yours Kai Thierbach