



President Walton's April 2021 Message

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Nobody's Fool



I would like to announce to you this is the final Eblast I will ever write...

Not really. April Fools! Everyone likes an April Fool's joke, especially if you're the one playing it. Of course, it isn't as funny if people really want what you said to be true or don't understand it is a joke. I once had a text from a pastor who informed me he was taking a call. Sensing it was a joke, I asked him if he needed help packing. I'm certain he was crushed I saw his rouse. Another time a friend's house had been broken into and robbed. When he called to tell me, not being one who looks like a fool, I thought it was a joke and gave him a hard time, only to later learn it was real. I really was the April Fool.

When I was in the parish one of the members would publish an April Fool's edition of the monthly newsletter with all kinds of silly and fabricated stories. It looked like the regular newsletter—same format, same logo, just made up stories. He sent them to a select group of unknowing members, and almost every year I would get a call about some article he had written in the faux newsletter which had fooled the reader. For instance, one year I was on vacation with my family when the bogus newsletter was sent. I always got a copy and actually thought it was incredible imaginative and funny.

This particular year the "newsletter" contained a phony article about the church relocating. The article was so believable my secretary called me and was so upset by the decision made by the congregation Board of Directors. Because I was away I hadn't seen the newsletter, but it always contained something to give it away. In this instance I think it gave the meeting for the decision as April 4, and he made sure it arrived on April 1. My secretary was frantic, alarmed I didn't know what was going on. Truthfully, I was initially stunned and then quickly realized what was going on. She went on and on about why it was such a bad idea, and how could they do that without first talking with the pastor, and the impact it would have on members. She was so upset I actually had to shout over her to get her to stop, asking her, "What day is it?" My question didn't make sense to her, so I kept asking until it dawned on her it was April 1st. There were many people fooled by his April Fool's newsletter over the years. My favorite was when he told of an upcoming retreat where my wife would be leading a Bible Study on "The Primal Scream," and people believed it. There are times when we are all a bit gullible.

Being tricked by a prankster does not one a total fool make. God's Word paint a picture of who is the real fool. The Psalmist wrote, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They

are corrupt, they do abominable deeds; there is none who does good.” This has been a strange year so far on a personal level. This has been a year of loss. It’s felt like I’ve been living in Good Friday a lot. I’ve lost friends to COVID, as have many others. Along with my wife, we mourned the loss of her father, while celebrating his triumphal entry into heaven. My own 90 year old father, who would have been 91 on April 6, went home to Jesus on March 25th, having been released to hospice weeks before and told nothing more could be done for him medically. I was blessed to visit him the week before he passed, and to actually be praying with him and commending him to Jesus on FaceTime when he breathed his last breath. Life passes by so quickly, and it is a somber reminder that all our days were numbered before one of them came to be. As difficult as living through those Good Friday’s in our life can be, we know that Good Friday is always followed by Easter Sunday. As Christians, we have this confidence. As overwhelming as death can be to survivors, I cannot begin to imagine how I would manage outside of a faith in Jesus. In fact, it would be foolish in my mind to even try to do it. Yet, many in the world think believers in Jesus are the foolish ones, putting their hope in something other than themselves. Sadly, one day they will find out the joke is on them. This is why you and I have a calling to connect people to our hope in Jesus! The new life He offers us is no April fool’s joke.



I have often been asked if God has a sense of humor. I believe He loves our laughter, and one of my favorite artist renderings is of the laughing Jesus. His greatest April Fool’s joke was the one Jesus played on the devil on Good Friday. Satan had planned his strategy. He had twisted the minds of the people who turned against Jesus. He had even managed to get Judas to betray Jesus and deliver Him into the hands of the authorities who would put Jesus to death. The devil’s reasoning must have been if Jesus is dead the threat would be gone. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died on the Cross. I see this as a display of God’s sense of humor. What the devil didn’t know was true victory belonged to Jesus, who rose from the dead, defeating sin and death and promising new life to all who believe. Satan was made a fool, a place he does not like to be, which is why he continues to wage war with our souls every day. Our battle isn’t against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers of darkness who seek to steal our joy, steal our hope and steal our faith.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15, “Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

I recently heard a story about a father and his young son, driving down the road when a bee flew into the window. The son, who was allergic to bees, began to panic, and the father, noticing the despair of his young son, reached up and grabbed the bee in his hand and balled it into a fist. After a few seconds he released the bee, which began flying around, and the son became fearful again. The father said, “Son, that bee won’t bother you. look at my hand.” When the father opened his hand the boy could see the stinger of the bee lodged in the father’s palm. Jesus took the sting of death—our death, and the death of those we love--upon Himself.



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promise. Celebrate the resurrection victory of Jesus, and know it has become our victory, for Jesus has promised us new life. As we continually put our trust in Him we are nobody's fool. Believe it because this is no April fool's joke! This is God's guarantee, one which you will never have to wonder or worry about, no matter what life hands you. Celebrate the loving and gracious hands of Jesus which carry us through the darkest of days and give us peace. May that peace be yours at Easter and always!

In His peace,
Greg

