

# Please Don't Make This Horrible Mistake Come Easter

Ask any Christian, Easter is a big deal. Celebrating the resurrection of Jesus is no small thing, and churches that are divided around thousands of things 364 days of the year are united on this one day—together we proclaim that Jesus lives! (Cue the music and all the feels.) But Easter isn't just a big deal for the Christians who sit in the pews; it's a big deal for pastors too. We plan and pray for large crowds. Advertise and encourage our church people to invite a neighbor. We know Easter has the potential to be a day when thousands of people who have not heard about Jesus show up to give us a hearing.

Ironically, this is why I'm so concerned about this year's Easter celebrations.

This year Easter falls on April first—April Fools' Day. Let that sink in.

The first of April is the day of jokes and pranks and “I can't believe I fell for that” moments. Generally, I like this day. A few years ago, I submitted my resignation to our church staff on April 1. I thought it was hilarious! They didn't. Either way, I'm afraid this year. I'm frightened by my fundamentalist brothers who may be sharpening their hermeneutical axes on Psalm 14:1—“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God.’”

I'm nervous that on this one day of the year when more people will stream into churches all over the world to give the message of Jesus a chance, pastors will think themselves clever and call those for whom Christ died fools. Not seekers or searchers or wayward or even far from God—but fools. Not loved or pursued or chased after by their heavenly Father—but rather, fools.

I wince to think of the millions who may hear this message. This isn't to say it's not true. It is true. We are the most supremely foolish when we fail to acknowledge the greatness, majesty and sovereign ruler of the universe. There is nothing more reckless than to ignore the immense generosity of God to forgive us, redeem us and call us beloved children. I am not picking a theological fight here; I'm simply asking fellow pastors to think about the timing. Ironically, I'm asking pastors not to be foolish.

Pastor, please don't call them fools this Easter.

Instead, treat your guests with dignity. It takes an enormous amount of courage for a new person to show up to a church building, sing songs in karaoke style for 25 minutes and then be asked to engage with a speaker for an additional 30 minutes. Acknowledge the bravery and even desperation of these men and women to trust you with their time and children and hearts. Don't whip them this Easter. Love them.

Pastor, please don't call them fools this Easter.

Instead, give them a reason to think differently about the church. We have a sketchy past, and it has never been our ability to be right that has drawn people to God. It's always been God's kindness that leads people to repentance. Don't "make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:19, NIV). Let them see the church in the best possible light this Easter. Let her be her best version on this day: generous and hopeful and joyful. She is a wonder and a wonderful family.

Pastor, please don't call them fools this Easter.

Instead, preach Jesus alone. If you were preaching to a large group of Pharisees, yeah, let 'em have it. Fools all around! Jesus was most harsh with those most acquainted with religion. But that's probably not who will be coming through your doors this Easter. Jesus was kind, gentle and full of grace to those

most broken, frail and caught in the trap of the devil. He was also direct.

Call people out of darkness and rebellion and into the wonderful light of life. Do this, and we can be proud this Easter. But for heaven's sake, pastor, don't call them fools.  
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