

WEEKLY SERMON

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Don't be April Fooled!

In case today's date has passed you by, it's April 1. A day when it has become customary to play tricks, known as April Fools' Day.

Has anyone managed to fool you today? As a child, I distinctly remember travelling with my family to Preston Docks to see the Red Arrows on one particular April 1.

From memory, I wasn't particularly impressed about going in the first place (I must have been at 'that age')! So, it was all the more disappointing to find out that it was an April Fools' Day joke and we'd made the journey for nothing!

A little research into this annual custom revealed that no-one really knows the exact origin of the April Fool; however, one of the earliest hoaxes on record was in 1698 when people in London were invited to go to the Tower of London to watch the annual washing of the lions ceremony.

Lots of people turned up to find there was no such thing! The prank worked so well that people kept pulling it year after year, targeting mostly out-of-towners.

By the mid-19th century, fake tickets were being printed for the bogus event and hundreds of people would arrive at the Tower of London only to realise they'd been tricked.

These are just a few examples of the practical jokes that have been pulled in honour of this day. Perhaps you have been caught out by one of these pranks on the odd occasion and have been able to take it in good humour; but I would suggest that on the whole, none of us want to appear to be foolish.

In John 12: 1-8, Mary does something that Judas suggests is foolish. She takes some expensive perfume and pours it on Jesus' feet before wiping them with her hair.

It was the ultimate expression of her gratitude for Jesus bringing her brother, Lazarus back from the dead, but also conveys her thankfulness for her own friendship with Jesus.

Although the perfume cost Mary a great deal in terms of its monetary value, through this action she also risked making herself vulnerable by her extravagant and intimate gesture of devotion in front of the other disciples.

Judas criticised Mary for wasting such an expensive item, but Jesus defended her actions and reminded everyone that he was worth more.

Some people might try to tell us, or make us think, that having a Christian faith and devoting ourselves to Jesus is foolish. They may not actually say it, but we live in a society today that is marked by selfishness, so it is visible in their actions, their lifestyle, and their priorities.

But the fool is a person who lives as though God does not exist (Psalm 14:1). Nothing is worth more than Jesus and Mary's actions prompt us to think about how we use our talents, resources and opportunities to express our love, gratitude and devotion to him.

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