



Pastor's Page

“April Fool?”

It was Tuesday morning and the phone rang - I answered it and following my usual greeting there was a pause before a cheerful voice said “Good morning Mr Simmons this is Lisa from *Age Concern* and how are you today? I didn't suspect anything as I often receive calls from organisations seeking support, so, I responded in like and said, “I'm very well thank you Lisa.” She then asked “How are you managing with your stairs these days?” And with great pastoral sensitivity I said “Is this some kind of joke?” Lisa laughed nervously and said “No Mr Simmons – but you are over 55 aren't you?” “I certainly am not” I replied with indignant incredulity. (You didn't know I suffered with that did you?!) “I'm very sorry” Lisa said “we're just given the information here and then we make contact, it seems on this occasion that our information is incorrect”. “It certainly is” I responded, trying now to sound both youthful and authoritative! Wishing me a nice day she terminated the conversation. Two questions immediately came into my head; Firstly, “am I really only 2 ¾ years away from needing help up the stairs?” and secondly “was that an April fool?!” Well the date was the 1st April so there's every possibility that I was “hoodwinked” (though no one has owned up to it.....yet!)

This suspected “April fool” got me thinking about the origins of this strange tradition. Well it appears (having done my research!) that the custom began hundreds of years ago following a change of calendars. In 1582, Pope Gregory introduced a new calendar called the Gregorian calendar which we still use today. This new calendar was introduced because the old calendar (the Julian calendar) was ahead by ten days due to each year being a little too long. Gregory moved the new calendar forward by ten days. Britain didn't accept the new calendar until 1752. In the old Julian calendar, New Year was celebrated from March 25th to April 1st. The first day of the year in the Gregorian calendar is January 1st. In France, people were forgetful and other people refused to accept the new calendar, so they still celebrated New Year on April 1st. Because of this other people would play tricks on them and call them ‘April Fools’. Hence this quirky little tradition was born.

Now both Lisa's little ‘age concern’ joke (if indeed it was a joke!) and the whole April fool tradition seem like fairly gentle fun to me. But the Bible warns repeatedly about the dangers of “foolishness” (Read Proverbs) Foolish thinking can lead to the ultimate denial of truth, namely the belief that there is no God. The 14th Psalm declares that “the fool says in his heart, there is no God.” Professor Richard Dawkins (a militant atheist) recently penned a book spanning 400 pages declaring that God is a delusion! But the bible says it is those who deny God's existence who are deluded and foolish. “For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities.....have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse” (Romans 1:20) And the Gospel writers tell the story of a man who actually claimed to be God and proved it by conquering death.

One may be fooled by a phoney phone call or a jolly jest but don't ever be fooled into thinking that this gospel message is either not true or not important. It's the hope for our world and it's the hope for you and me too - only a fool would reject it!

6th April 2008