**Sunday, March 28th, 2021**

**Mark 11:1-11**

April Fool's Day is just a few days away.

It is kind of a "fun day" to play tricks on others.

There have been some memorable April Fool's Day pranks pulled over the years.

In 2005, the media reported that NASA had discovered water on Mars,

          and had actual pictures on the official NASA website.

Many went to the NASA website to check it out.

They found a picture of a glass of water sitting on a Mars candy bar.

On April Fool's Day in 1996, Taco Bell announced they had purchased

the Liberty Bell, and that they would be renaming it the "Taco Liberty Bell".

Later in the Day, the press secretary for the white house announced

          they would also be selling the Lincoln Memorial

          and renaming it the Ford Lincoln Mercury Memorial.

People were calling the National Parks Department, all in an uproar.

The BBC news program "Panorama" reported in 1957,

          that due to a very mild winter

          and the virtual elimination of the dreaded spaghetti weevil,

          Swiss farmers were enjoying a bumper spaghetti crop.

Many people called in wanting to know how to grow their own spaghetti tree.

On April 1 st, 1998 Burger King published a full-page advertisement

          in an American newspaper announcing the introduction

          of a new item to their menu:

          a "Left-Handed Whopper" especially designed

          for the 32 million left-handed Americans.

According to the advertisement, the new whopper included

          the same ingredients as the original Whopper:

          lettuce, tomato, hamburger, etc.,

          but all the items were rotated 180 degrees

          for the benefit of their left-handed customers.

The next day, Burger King issued a follow-up press release

          which said that although the Left-Handed Whopper was a hoax,

          thousands of customers had gone into restaurants

          to request the new sandwich.

Simultaneously, many others demanded their own "right-handed" version.

It may be fun to trick people.

But often people are hurt, embarrassed, and sometimes angry,

          when they realize they have been pranked.

Today is Palm Sunday.

This day is recognized as the day Jesus entered Jerusalem

          riding on a donkey, a sign of a humble and caring king.

The streets of Jerusalem were buzzing

          and things would become busier as the day of Passover approached.

The city of Jerusalem had a population of about 60,000 people,

          but that number would increase dramatically

          as the day of Passover drew near.

As Jesus approached Jerusalem riding on a donkey,

          the people recognized and understood the symbolism.

They cheered, and waved palm branches.

They lay their cloaks and palm branches on the ground,

          to keep the dust down and to honor this King.

This was the one who could change everything.

He had raised Lazarus from the dead.

He had fed 5000 with a few loaves bread and a couple of fish.

He could make the blind see, the deaf hear, and the lame walk.

And they cheered as He came near.

They believed this King would set things right again.

He would eliminate the Roman's oppression of the people.

As they joined in the procession toward the city they sang joyful songs.

They shouted "Halleluiah" - "Praise the Lord!" and "Hosanna" "Save us!"

They hoped for peace and victory.

But the Scribes and Pharisees were not happy.

To them Jesus was a troublemaker.

They were happy with the way things were going

          – they had authority, and they made money by setting their own rules,

          – they wanted to get rid of this troublemaker.

The religious leaders enjoyed strutting like peacocks before the people

          to show their "righteous" standing with God.

While the establishment and the powers to be, saw Jesus as a real threat,

          the crowds saw Him differently.

Some perceived that a real live prophet of God was in their midst.

They marveled at the compassionate man who did miraculous things.

He understood their pain and suffering

          which disease, poverty, and oppression brought.

As their King He could overthrow the Roman rulers,

          as well as the deceitful religious rulers.

Life could be so much better.

And so, they clapped and sang, laughed, and cheered.

But Jesus knew He was doing so much more for the people.

And He knew how painful and difficult it would be.

He was making his way toward the feast of Passover,

          and He knew what awaited him:

He would take the place of the sacrificial lambs by offering himself on the cross.

The jubilant reception He received at this moment

          would soon be replaced with cries for His crucifixion.

Because the people did not know God's much bigger plan,

          and could not understand it at that time,

          the Palm Sunday celebration could have appeared to be

          a horrible April Fool's Day joke.

They were hurt, embarrassed, and angry.

They believed they had been so foolish.

This disappointment overwhelmed them.

Even the closest followers of Jesus didn't understand.

It wouldn't be until after Easter, and then Pentecost,

          that they would see what amazing things God was doing for them.

God doesn't do April Fool's Day jokes.

He loves us too much.

He promised to be with us, to take care of us.

Often, we simply have to trust God

          when everything looks like it is falling apart.

AMEN