Lesson: April Fools’ Day

April Fools’ Day has been around for hundreds of years, but there is no exact date or year of origin, though there are numerous theories. One angle is that the equinox, which introduces seasonal changes, makes people uncertain or giddy. More likely, it is associated with the introduction of the Gregorian calendar in the sixteenth century; because the former Julian calendar began on April 1, while the revised calendar started on January 1. People certainly could have joked about forgetting that date. Apparently, eighteenth century England regularly observed the day by pulling pranks on people, like taping a sign to their backs. Over the years, the day has become an opportunity to trick people by telling tall tales and getting them believing it until they hear, “April Fools” and then they know they’ve been duped. Harmless pranks are still popular on this day, but malicious pranks are unlikely to be laughed off and are unadvised.

The dictionary defines the noun “fool” as a person lacking judgment or good sense; as a verb it means to dupe or trick someone. Today is about fooling people, or making fools out of them; but it is the prankster who is acting foolish. Thus, the antics may have multiple effects, none positive. Calling someone a fool is an insult, unless said in jest, but it still might hurt a person’s feelings. People calling others “fool” are themselves, fools. This entire holiday is rather foolish.

* PSA 14:1 ~ Only a fool would say in his or her heart that there is no God. Such people are corrupt and have done terrible things in the eyes of the Lord.
* PSA 107:17 ~ Fools become afflicted because of their evil ways.
* PRO 10:18, 23 ~ Those who disguise their hatred with lies and those who slander another are fools. It is the sport of fools to do mischief, but a person of understanding is wise.
* PRO 12:15, 20 ~ The way of fools is right in their own eyes, but the one who listens to advice is wise. There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil, but for those promoting peace there is joy.
* PRO 18:7 ~ A fool’s mouth is his or her destruction, and a snare to the soul.
* ECC 7:9 ~ Do not hasten to be angry, for anger belongs to fools.
* ISA 44:9–11 ~ Only fools would create their own gods and idols.
* MAT 5:21–22 ~ Jesus said, “You have heard that you must never kill or you will be in danger of the judgment, but I say that if you become angry with another person, or call a person a fool without cause, you will be in danger of the judgment.”

Now take the word “foolishness” as a noun, which can mean either absurdity or stupidity, the former denoting silly and the latter denoting folly. Again, there is a big difference depending on intent. It is not so simple for the recipient of a foolish comment or action to determine intent or meaning from it. Therefore, foolishness should be avoided.

* LEV 5:4 ~ Anyone who vows to do something foolish, whether the vow is sincere or not, is guilty.
* ISA 29:13–14 ~ God says, “Those people speak of me but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made of rules taught by men. Therefore, I will take vengeance upon them, and turn their wisdom into foolishness.”
* EZE 13:3 ~ Woe to the foolish prophets who follow their own spirit and have seen nothing.
* MAT 12:36 ~ Jesus said, “On Judgment Day, people will have to give account for every foolish word they spoke.”
* 1 CO 1:19–27, 31 ~ It is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is wisdom? Has God not made foolish the wisdom of this world? The world through its wisdom cannot know God. The Jews want a sign and the Gentiles want wisdom. But we preach to them about Christ’s crucifixion, which to the Jews is an obstacle and to the Gentiles is foolishness. But Christ is the power and wisdom of God to all who are called, both Jews and Gentiles. The foolishness of God is wiser than the wisdom of humankind. The weakness of God is stronger than the strength of people. You can see that not many of those who are wise, mighty, and noble by earthly standards, are called by God. But God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confuse the wise, and the weak things of this world to confound the mighty. Those who glory, let them glory in the Lord only.

Next, let’s look at the word “fooled” as an adjective, which means being misled or conned. Both refer to deception. If a person feels fooled, they might not take someone’s comment or action as a joke. It might be funny to the instigator, but if it isn’t funny to the receiver, it would be better to have refrained from the ploy. In actuality, nobody likes being fooled. Even if they are good sports about it, they probably could do without it.

* PRO 1:7 ~ The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; only fools despise wisdom and instruction.
* PRO 14:6, 8, 16, 29, 33 ~ A scornful person seeks wisdom but does not find it; however, knowledge is easy for those who understand. The wisdom of the prudent is to understand where they are going, but the folly of fools is deceit. Wise people shy away from and depart from evil, but a fool rages on with confidence. Those who are slow to anger have great understanding, but those who are hasty produce folly. Wisdom abides in the minds of those with understanding, but it is not known in the minds of fools.
* PRO 17:27–28 ~ Those who have knowledge spare their words, and a person of understanding has an excellent spirit. Even fools, if they hold their peace, are considered wise; those who shut their mouths are considered to be people of understanding.
* ECC 7:25 ~ I directed my mind to know the truth, to investigate matters, to seek wisdom and find answers; and to know the evil of folly and the foolishness of madness.
* ISA 44:25 ~ God proves the false prophets to be liars and fools, causing their prophecies to be invalid.
* LAM 2:14 ~ Your prophets have said foolish things and seen false visions. They have not pointed out to you your sins but rather have told you that everything is fine.
* MAT 24:11 ~ Jesus said, “False prophets will come and lead many astray, performing wonders in an attempt to trick people.”
* 2 CO 11:13–14 ~ They have fooled people into thinking they are Christ’s apostles. But that is not surprising, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

Father, we pray for people who are taken advantage of, whether to deceive, to be funny, or to swindle. We also pray that those who selfishly take advantage of others would see their error and change their ways, or otherwise be subject to action that might compel them to rethink foolish words and actions. Deception, trickery, lying, and bearing false witness are violations of the ninth commandment. Help us to obey this commandment and refrain from staging cruel pranks or con games. Let us be wise, to listen and observe, and not assume things arbitrarily. Let us refrain from foolishness, insults, and deception. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

By Andrew V. Barber (posted 04/01/2024)