

AN APRIL FOOL AND OTHER FOOLS, sermon by Rabbi Baumgard at
Temple Beth Am, April 2, 1976

Once upon a time there was a man whose name was Simon. Simon was a very stern man. He always had a serious look. He frowned a little and seemed somewhat sad most of the time.
^{TO whom}
He was the kind of person you didn't tell a joke to, because you were sure he wouldn't laugh. You wouldn't invite him to a party, because you were sure he wouldn't have a good time.

Well, Simon didn't smile much, but on one day of the year, each year on the same day, Simon would laugh out loud. On this day, April 1st, Simon made a point to play tricks on people, and when he saw the person was surprised, he would laugh and laugh.

For example, on April 1st, 1960, Simon called his sister on the phone and said he was sending over some milk. Later, his sister heard a knock on the door, and when she opened it, a cow walked into her house. Simon had brought the cow and pushed the cow into the house. While his sister stood there unbelieving, Simon laughed and laughed..

Another time on April 1st, 1975, Simon sent all of his friends some money~~not~~ \$1 bills, not \$10 bills, not \$20 bills, but A \$100 bill to each. Simon walked up and down the Dadeland shopping center the next day and watched his friends trying to spend the \$100. When he saw how surprised his friends were when the salesman told them the money was fake, just play-money, Simon would laugh and laugh.

Why did Simon play all these tricks on April 1st?

Well, April 1st was his birthday, and because he played these tricks every year on the same day, people began to call him the April fool.

Now you may think that Simon, or the April fool, was an unusually silly man, but there are other silly fools who may be even more unusual than Simon.

What do you think of someone who laughs all day, every day of the year? Is he a fool or not? I know a woman who laughs when you tell her someone got hurt in an auto accident. If you tell her you have no money to buy food, she laughs.

If you tell her ^{your} ~~her~~ child is sick, she laughs. People call her Gertrude the Giggler, because she laughs in sad times as well as happy times. "There is nothing real but love," Gertrude says, "just make believe that everything is for the best, and you'll feel good all over, and you'll laugh at everything".

Very odd.
Most people find "Gertrude the Giggler" peculiar. It doesn't seem right to treat everything in the same way. Most people laugh at happy times and cry at sad times. Most people ~~think~~ Gertrude is a fool, but Gertrude goes on giggling.

Then there is a man called Willie the ~~Worrier~~. He never laughs even one day a year. If you tell Willie he just won a million dollars, Willie says, "How can I afford to pay the ~~government~~ ^{if they then} taxes on a million dollars", and he starts chewing his finger nails.

If you tell Willie that his boss called to give him a better job, Willie says, "I'm not even good enough for my old job, how can I hope to do all those hard things in the new job".

If you tell Willie the Worrier¹ that the doctor said he was in perfect health, Willie ways, "maybe the Doctor made a mistake. I should see another Doctor. I should get another opinion".

Willie is never happy. He never laughs. Most people think Wille is a fool because he always looks for the bad in things.

Next to "Gertrude the Giggler", who always laughs, and next to "Willie the Worrier", who never laughs, Simon seems to be less of a fool, but maybe all three of these people have something to learn about life.

The Bible teaches in the Book of Psalms¹¹, that each day is a gift of God and we ought to rejoice in it. We ought to be as happy as we can every day. But the Bible also teaches^{that} life has its problems and its troubles², and we must ~~face them~~^{admit to} face them^{and face them}. The Bible³ teaches "There is a time to laugh and a time to cry". When the fun time comes, the Bible⁴ teaches, grab hold of it, squeeze it⁵ and laugh with it.

When the sad time comes, don't pretend it isn't sad. Don't be afraid to cry. Jews have had a lot to cry about throughout our history. When

When problems come, the Bible teaches, face up to them ~~and~~
~~but not~~ ~~just afraid of~~
 work hard to solve them. Don't be ~~merely frightened by~~ them.

The Bible teaches, "when sorrow comes, it lingers only
 for the night, ~~and~~ ^{but} joy comes in the morning with the rising
 sun". This means ~~that~~ don't give up hope, because the world is
 so created by God that the sad times don't last forever.

- "Willie the Worrier" is wrong to be sad all the time, and
- "Gertrude the Giggler" is wrong to laugh all the time, and
- "Simon the April Fool" is wrong to laugh only one day a year.

On Passover, we eat a Hillel sandwich, which contains something bitters and some sweets. We must be able to appreciate both and go on, ^{with} courageously, confident in life's basic purpose and meaning. Think of this at your Seders.

This is what it means to have faith. It means that in spite of sad things, God intended for us to be happy in the long run. Don't be afraid to cry when things are sad, but be sure that happy things are around the corner.