

3rd August 2021

Spam

**“Lovely Spam! Wonderful Spam! Lovely Spam! Wonderful Spam!
Spa-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-am! Spa-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-am!”**

Terry Jones and Michael Palin, Monty Python’s Flying Circus

Spam is a well-known brand of canned cooked pork. It first appeared in 1937 and became popular worldwide after its extensive use during World War II. *Spam* is now trademarked in over a hundred countries, and more than 122 million cans of the *Spam* family of products are sold worldwide each year. So why on earth, I ask you, is the word “spam” used for unsolicited emails or messages on social media?

I had trouble recently sending out these “Thought for the Day” pieces to people with certain email addresses. Their email server had labelled my communications as “spam”, an internet term for messages sent to a large number of recipients at the same time. It’s a mass-marketing technique, and, of course, Internet Service Providers are, quite rightly, trying to stamp it out. And the origins?

It’s from the 1970 “Spam” sketch in the BBC’s *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*. In a café, a waitress is reading a menu where every item contains spam. “Eggs and Spam”, “Chips and Spam”, “Egg, Spam, Chips and Spam” ... and so on. As the spam-filled menu is recited, a chorus of Viking patrons – yes, Vikings! – drown out any conversation with a song, repeating “spam” over and over again: *Spam, Spam, Spam, Spam ... Wonderful Spam!* until they’re told to shut up! So, for any unsolicited input in the email world, spam seemed the appropriate term. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Some things happen to us that are unwanted and unexpected. We prepare as best we can for these and create “filters” to keep Vikings singing “Spam, spam ...” out of our café. We won’t keep every intrusion at bay, of course. Sometimes bad things get through, in the form of accidents, or tragedies, or disappointments, or traumas. But thank God, unlike the *Monty Python* sketch, there will never be spam with everything.

Now, I hope your Internet Provider doesn’t treat my email message as “spam” today. I might have to get the Vikings onto them if they do!

A prayer for today

When I send you spam in my prayers, saying the same things over and over again, be patient with me. There will be other important things in my messages too. Amen