

Worship at Home for April 11 Holy Humour Sunday

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you'd like to comment or have a question, please email me directly:
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In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

If Biblical Characters rode Ubers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TqYmer6X2PM>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kM_M2qIAIjs

Centering Prayer

Giver of life and of joy,
continue to open our minds and hearts to your Spirit,
as we seek to hear your laughter echo through the universe.
Amen

A joke to begin with:

*My body only fights off illness on Saturday and Sunday
I have a weekend immune system.*

Opening Music: "Give to Us Laughter"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXyKhH67Uas>

Opening Prayer by Thom M. Shuman

You smiled and the sun burst
through the shadows of chaos;
you chuckled,
and the platypus splashed
in creation's fountain;
you laughed,
and all that is good and beautiful
was given shape by you,
Imaginative God.

Snickering at the feeble attempts
of the evil one,
you showed us
how to resist temptation;
giggling at sin's desperate desire
to hold on to us,
you released us by your love;
howling with laughter
at death's foolish belief
that the tomb could hold you,
you burst forth into the kingdom
as the stars pealed with joy,
Laughing Jesus.

As you fill us with new life,
may we delight in sharing it with others;
as you tell us the good news
which can never be taken from us,
may we rejoice in offering it
to the broken, the sad, the lonely;
as you tickle us with grace,
may we give it away with laughter on our lips
and joy in our hearts,
Spirit of Easter.
Amen

Music for Holy Humour Sunday: This year, Passover began March 7 and ended April 4. I offer this end as a way to remember our Jewish siblings and their holy time. I think it is also pretty funny – and this is actually a hymn that is included in our own Voices United Hymn book!

The Maccabeats - Dayenu - Passover

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZgDNPGZ9Sg>

Another silly story:

Visiting his grandparents, a small boy opened the big family Bible. He was fascinated as he fingered through the old pages. Suddenly, something fell out. He picked it up and found that it was an old leaf that had been pressed flat between the pages. "Mama, look what I found," he called out.

"What have you got there, dear?" his mother asked.

With astonishment in his voice, the boy answered, "I think it's Adam's underwear!"

Scripture: John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the authorities, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy

Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.'

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord.' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.'

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.' Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

A "true" story:

The young minister tries an experiment. She tells everyone in the church during one Sunday sermon to "stand up if you want to go to heaven!" And everyone stands up. She then tells them to sit back down. Then she says "stand up if you want to go to hell" and one man stands up, Murphy. So the minister says "Murphy why on earth do you want to go to hell?" Murphy replied "Oh no preacher, I don't want to go to hell, but I couldn't bear to see you standing up by yourself!"

Reflection

This scripture above is not one of the 'funny' stories in the bible. It does not contain the incredulous laughter of Sara imagining that she will become a mother in her old age, or the silliness of Jonah trying to escape God and ending up in the belly of a whale for a few days. There are no chuckles here from a crowd listening to Jesus' hyperbole. It is a raw and emotional scene, with tension and grief and continued fear still hovering over the disciples.

On this second Sunday of Easter, when we mark 'Holy Humour'*, it is also traditional to read this passage of Jesus' appearance in the midst of uncertainty and some doubt. It is a reminder that despite all that the disciples and friends of Jesus have experienced, there will be the joy and wonder of Jesus' return. I imagine that the disciples may have laughed in surprise as they were startled by Jesus' sudden appearance. I imagine that their smiles in that instant were so wide as to be painful.

This story can remind us that in our own fears and doubts, our own uncertainties, God's love in Jesus can appear for us, can help us to find laughter and wonder and hope for tomorrow. Humour can help us to cope with grief - and I encourage you to think of times when you have shared laughter at a funeral or a visitation. Wittiness can dispel tension, or gently help us to see a truth that might otherwise seem harsh.

Laughter, as writer Anne Lamott describes, is "carbonated holiness." Whether that is a belly laugh shared with a friend or family member, or a small chuckle over a small joke, laughter is healing. And the

ability to find a story or a situation amusing is truly a gift from God – an opportunity to ‘exercise our insides’, a sure proof that we are indeed “fearfully and wonderfully made.” *Psalms 139* We should not be afraid to let our emotions bubble out in laughter, just as they do in our tears.

Of course it can be difficult – especially in these continued pandemic days – to find a reason to laugh. It can be challenging to let ourselves find amusement when we are still being kept from each other’s company, when we still can’t live our lives as we would choose, when ‘normal’ seems on the horizon but perhaps hasn’t reached us yet. Yet it is in these moments that I believe God encourages us to laugh – at the antics of birds and squirrels in our backyards or outside our apartment windows, at the bad puns our friends share, and the attempts others make to lighten our hearts. In my neighbourhood near Winston Churchill Blvd, the local Longo’s grocery store has an LED sign which displays the ‘deals’ for the week. Over the past month, the sign-changer has added a pun to virtually every screen – and it brings a smile or a chuckle to me every time I see it.

God listens for our laughter as much as God listens for our tears and our prayers. May we find an element of joy today, may we look for an opportunity to laugh, to smile, to lighten our hearts and celebrate the God who wants to laugh with us. Amen

Music for reflection

Ode to Joy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q46yN4Efock>

Another story:

Little Philip was walking home in the rain with his mother following Sunday worship. It finally stopped raining as they rounded the corner, where to their surprise and delight appeared a vivid double rainbow in the sky.

“Doesn’t it look like an artist painted this rainbow?” his mother exclaimed. “I bet God painted this just for you!”

“Yes,” replied Philip, “God did it, and God did it left handed.”

Confused, his mother asked him, “What makes you say God did this with God’s left hand?”

“Well,” said Philip, “we learned in Sunday School that Jesus sits on God’s right hand.”

Prayers of the People

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of joy – for smiles and shared humour, for the antics of children and pets, for stories that amuse us or tickle our funny bones

We thank you, God, that you have given us time in our lives for laughter – that whole body and spirit exercise of joy that can help to heal us, enliven us, reduce our stress and anxieties, and draw us together.

You, God, have given us a sense of the ridiculous and the ability to appreciate it when it comes. You help us to smile through tears, and laugh until we cry. You are with us in both of those moments, encouraging us to express ourselves and our feelings

Bring joy and hope, rejoicing and healing, today God.
Send comfort and healing to those who are alone, afraid, or sick in body, mind and spirit.
We remember today those fighting the COVID-19 virus through their work in health care, or research, or as patients in homes and hospitals and ICUs.
Give a lighter heart to those who have been most affected by this pandemic.

Bring laughter and wholeness, merriment and faith today, God.
Send your Spirit of joy into the hearts of those who are grieving, send the love of Christ into hearts that are lonely.
We remember those we know and love who are hurting - who are still isolated or alone, who are still waiting to celebrate the lives of loved ones who have died, who are still walking a path of pain or doubt.

Take our prayers, God – may they be lifted in our laughter as well as in our praying, and turn our lives to your joy and hope. Amen

Closing music: Hallelujah Is Our Song
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tqM7FxU9o28>

And one more joke:

God is talking to one of his angels and says, "Do you know what I have just done? I have just created a 24-hour period of alternating light and darkness on Earth. Isn't that good?"

The angel says, "Yes, but what will you do now?"

God says, "I think I'll call it a day."

Blessing by Rev. Gord Waldie

The Laughing One called us together
so we could share in the laughter of life.
The Laughing One sends us out,
to carry the joy of life and love to the world.
Go out to laugh, to live to love. And when you hear a good joke...
remember that sharing is a great thing!

A few more to leave with you:

* From the website of [The Joyful Noiseletter](#): "For centuries in Eastern Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant countries, the week following Easter Sunday, including "Bright Sunday" (the Sunday after Easter), was observed by the faithful as "days of joy and laughter" with parties and picnics to celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

Churchgoers and pastors played practical jokes on each other, drenched each other with water, told jokes, sang, and danced.

The custom was rooted in the musings of early church theologians (like Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom) that God played a practical joke on the devil by raising Jesus from the dead. "Risus paschalis - the Easter laugh," the early theologians called it.

In 1988 the Fellowship of Merry Christians began encouraging churches and prayer groups to resurrect Bright Sunday celebrations and call it "Holy Humor Sunday," with the theme: "Jesus is the LIFE of the party."