

“Laughter is Carbonated Holiness”

John 10:11-18, Psalm 23, Psalm 126:1-2a

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A guy goes to his barber and he's all excited. He says, "I'm going to go to Rome. I'm flying Delta, staying at the Rome Hilton, and I'm going to see the pope." The barber says: "Hmm, Delta is a terrible airline, the Rome Hilton is a dump, and when you see the pope, you'll probably be standing in back of 10,000 people." So, the guy goes to Rome and comes back. His barber asks: "How was it?" "Great," he says, "Delta is a wonderful airline. The hotel was great. And I got to meet the pope!" "You met the pope?" "I bent down to kiss the pope's ring." "And what did he say?" "He said, 'Where did you get that crummy haircut?'"

Happy Risus (Rye-sus) Paschalis (Pas-cha-lays) which is Latin for Easter Laugh. For centuries the church celebrated humor and laughter following Easter. In celebration of Jesus' resurrection, churchgoers and pastors played practical jokes on each other, told jokes, sang, and danced. The congregation dumped water on their pastor. Legend has it that this is the source of the tradition of dumping water on a winning coach. If ever there was a reason for laughter, it is to be found in the resurrection of Jesus. God completely turning the tables, shouting back to us "life" when we shouted "death". God totally and perfectly having the last word to all that diminishes life with Resurrection glory.

Grace is best celebrated with laughter and joy. In our laughter, we see our arrogance and ignorance – we are laughing at ourselves. And in our laughter, we see the goodness and joy of God who loves us in spite of ourselves. Anne Lamott says, "Grace is spiritual WD-40. The movement of grace is what changes us, heals us and our world. Against all odds, you will get your sense of humor about yourself back. Laughter really is carbonated holiness."

A lady was mailing an old family Bible to her brother. When she took it to the post office they asked, "Is there anything in here that is breakable?" She replied, "Only the commandments."

Take time to be funny, rejoice in the Lord. Let laughter explode and have fun with God's Word. For laughter is healing, gives strength to the weak. God loves to see smiles, for they lift up the meek. Take time to be silly, it's good for the soul. Too many are somber, grabbing control. Let go and let God's love wash over your soul. Heavenly transcendence can be your life's goal. For humor is holy, it sanctifies life. Replenishes hope and oft softens advice. It undercuts sorrow, deflates haughty pride. So smile and hang on, and rejoice in life's ride.

We laugh, rejoice and celebrate, because Jesus is our risen savior, providing everything we need, protecting us, guiding us, laughing with us and transforming each of us into an eternal, glorious, spectacular person.

Jesus said, John 10:11-18 NRSV **10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away--and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father."**

Psalm 23 NLT & NRSV **"The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. God makes me lie down in green pastures; God leads me beside still waters; God restores my soul. God leads me in right paths for God's name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long."**

God is our good shepherd who gives us everything we need, forgives us, heals us and resurrects us. Our sense of self-worth should come from knowing you are a beloved, cherished child of God. God is loving you to transform your fear, worry, and anxiety into joy, love, and laughter.

Laughter bubbles up whenever we celebrate who we are, a beloved, cherished child of God, who is being resurrected and will enjoy abundant, eternal, glorious life. In contrast worry, fear, and anxiety grow when we try to create our own worth, to solve the world's problems by our self, measuring our worth by our productivity, popularity, career, grades, stuff, or social media likes. Sabbath is our reset button when we deliberately take time to experience God who gives you joys to savor, green pasture delights, still water wonder, right path discoveries, encouraging companionship, peaceful reconciling dinners, assurance of your worth, abundant blessings, unfailing love and an eternal home in God's mansion. Our life is reset whenever we disengage from letting the world tell us who we are, or negative thoughts tell us who we are, and instead listen to God telling us we are God's masterpiece.

Laughter is a connection with God. Laughter connects us with each other. A church that laughs together understands the triumph of resurrection to unite the entire cosmos in vibrant harmony. The psalmist sings, **Psalm 126 1-2a NLT "When the Lord brought back the exiles to Jerusalem, it was like a dream! We were filled with laughter, and we sang for joy."**

Years ago, there was a session meeting at a little country church. One of the newer, younger elders made a motion: "I move that we buy a chandelier for the church." This led to an hour-long discussion of the matter, at the end of which an old, respected elder stood. The Session fell silent in anticipation of his words. "Now, I disagree with this motion that is here before us. I have three concerns. First, ain't none of us got enough education to spell chandelier so's we can order one out of the Sears and Roebucks catalogue. Second, once we get it here, we ain't got anyone knows how to play it. And third, what we really oughtta be talkin' about is getting more light in the church."

Laughter is good for us physically. Laughter stretches muscles and sends more oxygen to our tissues. Laughter provides the advantages of a mild workout.

Martin Luther said, "You have as much laughter as you have faith." John Wesley said, "A sour religion is the devil's religion." Soren Kierkegaard wrote, "Humor is intrinsic to Christianity." Chesterton believes, "A good joke is the closest thing we have to divine revelation." Karl Barth said, "Laughter is the closest thing to the grace of God." Henry Beecher prescribes, "Mirth is God's medicine. Everybody ought to bathe in laughter." Charles Schultz wrote, "Humor is proof that everything is going to be alright with God nevertheless."

George Burns said, "The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible." I took this advice today, so you have an extra eight minutes to do something that makes you laugh. Laughter is carbonated holiness. Amen