

Sermons at
First Lutheran Church (ELCA)
Reggie Denton, Pastor

John 20:19-31
April 19, 2020 (2nd Sunday of Easter)
Holy Humor Sunday

Can you imagine how the disciples FELT? Inside, outside, upside down! Jesus was dead and in the tomb. And now they've JUST heard from Mary Magdalene that he's ALIVE. They didn't know WHAT to think. They didn't understand what was going on or WHY it was happening. They'd LOCKED themselves in the upper room.

But LOCKED DOORS can't keep JESUS out. "Jesus came and stood among them and," it SAYS, "the disciples REJOICED when they saw the Lord."

You see, JOY is what the CHURCH is supposed to LOOK like. You see it again and again in scripture. Jesus loves a good PARTY! He performed His first miracle at a wedding reception in Cana, turning water into wine. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus tells us that the overjoyed father threw a big party for his returning son. "We are going to have a feast, a celebration," the father declared, "because this son of mine was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:23-24).

I think that's one of the reason's the church grew so FAST in those first few centuries. The church was a JOYFUL place, and people wanted to be PART of a community like that.

Joy brings laughter, especially when it follows the release of a burden. Ecc 3(:4) says, "There is a time to weep AND a time to laugh, a time to mourn AND a time to dance." Jesus said, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you WILL laugh" (Luke 6:21). So, considering the LOSS the DISCIPLES had experienced, I imagine there was A LOT of laughter in that upper room after Jesus appeared to them.

So today we celebrate Holy Humor Sunday. Jesus has the last laugh over death, so today we're going to SHARE some laughter – at least I HOPE so. Folks have been sending me their favorite jokes for YEARS, and today I want to share some of them with YOU.

THESE are old classics about Christians. I know you will be good Lutherans and SMILE as LOUDLY as you can.

To start off, HUNTING is a big deal in these parts, and CHRISTIANS hunt too.

Two deer hunters were standing on a ridge not too far from a highway on the opening day of deer season. They both saw a trophy buck meandering towards them. As the one hunter raised his gun to shoot, a funeral procession slowly rounded the corner and proceeded down the road. The hunter lowered his gun, took off his hat, and stood with his head bowed until the procession was past. Of course by then, the deer was long gone.

The other hunter exclaimed, "Wow. That was the most sportsmanlike act I've ever seen. You allowed this trophy buck to escape while showing such compassion and kindness toward someone's dearly departed. You are a great humanitarian and a shining example to sportsmen throughout the world."

The first hunter nodded and said, "Well, we WERE married for 42 years."

A lawyer, a doctor, and a PREACHER went hunting together. When a prize buck ran past them, they all fired at the exact same moment and the buck dropped.

However, there was only one bullet hole, and they didn't know WHICH of them shot it. So they took it to the registration center, not knowing who should tag it.

The agent said, "Let me LOOK at the deer. Sometimes I can figure it out."

He asked a few questions, examined the deer carefully, and declared, "The PREACHER shot this buck!"

Amazed, they all asked how he knew. Stooping down, he pointed out the wound. "See here. It went in one ear and out the other."

Preachers DO get a little competitive sometimes.

One day, someone made the comment that preaching to PEOPLE isn't really all that hard. A REAL challenge would be to preach to a BEAR. One thing led to another and they decided to do an experiment. They would all go out into the woods, find a bear, preach to it, and attempt to CONVERT it. Seven days later, they all gathered together to DISCUSS the experience.

Father Flannery, who has his arm in a sling, is on crutches, and has various bandages, goes first. "Well," he says, "I went into the woods to find me a bear. And when I found him I began to read to him from the Catechism. Well, that bear wanted NOTHING to do with me and began to SLAP me around. So I quickly grabbed my holy water, sprinkled him and, Holy Mary Mother of God, he became as gentle a lamb. The bishop is coming out next week to give him first communion and confirmation."

Reverend Billy Bob spoke next. He was in a wheelchair, with an arm and both legs in casts, and an IV drip. In his best fire and brimstone oratory he claimed, "WELL brothers, you KNOW that we don't SPRINKLE! I went out and I FOUND me a bear. And then I began to read to my bear from God's HOLY WORD! But that bear wanted nothing to do with me. So I took HOLD of him and we began to WRESTLE. We wrestled down ONE hill, UP another and DOWN another until we came to a creek. So I quickly DUNKED him and BAPTIZED his hairy soul. And just like you said, he became as gentle as a lamb. We spent the rest of the day PRAISING JESUS."

They both looked down at the rabbi, who was lying in a hospital bed. He was in a body cast and traction with IV's and monitors running in and out of him. He was in bad shape. The rabbi looks up and says, "Looking back on it, the best way to start may not have been circumcision."

Now, getting them IN is one thing, but how about getting them OUT.

Three ministers were talking one day, and one said, "You know I've been having the worst trouble in our bell tower lately—it's full of BATS, they're EVERYWHERE. I took a couple shots with my rifle the other day, to try to scare them off, but I think I did more damage to the tower than to the bats."

The second preacher said, "You know I have the same problem. One day I just got fed up with it, and I climbed up there and I CAUGHT every last one of them. I put them all in some sacks and took them way out to the country to release them. But you know, I think most of those bats BEAT me back to town."

And the third pastor said, kind of matter-of-factly, "I USED to have that problem, but I got rid of them."

Now the other two were stunned and said, "How?"

And he replied, "Well, I caught them all TOO, but I brought them down into the CHURCH. And then I baptized and confirmed each one of them, and I haven't seen ANY of them since."

A doctor, a lawyer, a little boy and a PRIEST were out for a Sunday afternoon flight on a small private plane. Suddenly, the plane developed engine trouble. In spite of the best efforts of the pilot, the plane started to go down. Finally, the pilot grabbed a parachute, yelled to the passengers that they had better jump, and then he bailed out.

Unfortunately, there were only THREE parachutes remaining. The doctor grabbed one and said "I'm a doctor, I save lives, so I MUST live," and jumped out.

The lawyer then said, "I'm a lawyer and lawyers are the SMARTEST people in the world. I DESERVE to live." He also grabbed a pack and jumped.

The priest looked at the little boy and said, "My son, I've lived a long and full life. You are young and have your whole life AHEAD of you. TAKE the last parachute and live in peace."

The little boy handed the parachute BACK to the priest and said, "Not to worry, Father. The 'smartest man in the world' just took off with my back pack."

Now, as we all know, finances can sometimes be a PROBLEM in the church, but sometimes the SOLUTION PRESENTS itself.

Before taking the offering, the pastor announced that the church had several unexpected expenses in the last month. She encouraged everyone to make a significant offering that morning, and as extra INCENTIVE she said that whoever gave the MOST that day would get to pick THREE hymns. When the ushers brought the offering forward, there was a check for a thousand dollars on the top of the plate. The pastor asked the donor to please come forward, and an older woman came to the front, absolutely beaming. The pastor thanked her profusely and then reminded her that she was entitled to pick three hymns. Without hesitation she pointed at three handsome young men and said, "I pick him, and him, and him."

(Another) minister was preoccupied with thoughts of how he was going to ask the congregation to come up with MORE money than they were EXPECTING for repairs to the church building. So, he was annoyed to find that the REGULAR organist was sick and a substitute had been brought in at the last minute. The substitute wanted to know what to play. "Here's a copy of the service," he said impatiently. "But you'll have to think of something to play AFTER I make the announcement about the finances."

During the service, the minister paused and said, "Brothers and sisters, we are in great difficulty; the roof repairs cost TWICE as much as we expected, and we need \$4,000 more. Any of you who can pledge \$100 or more, please stand up."

At that moment, the substitute organist began to play the national anthem.

And THAT is how the SUBSTITUTE organist BECAME the REGULAR organist!

A crumbling old church building needed remodeling, so, during his sermon, the preacher made an impassioned appeal looking directly at the richest man in town.

At the end of the sermon, the rich man stood up and announced, "Pastor, I will contribute \$1,000."

Just then, plaster from the ceiling fell and struck the rich man on the shoulder.

He promptly stood BACK up and shouted, "Pastor, I will increase my donation to \$5,000."

Before he could sit back down, plaster fell on him AGAIN, and again he virtually SCREAMED, "Pastor, I will double my last pledge."

And from the back, the treasurer shouted, "Hit him again, Lord! Hit him again!"

Thank goodness we are forgiven for our mistakes.

Joe was opening a new business, and one of his friends decided to send flowers for the occasion. The flowers arrived and Joe was shocked when he read the card. It said, "Rest in Peace." Enraged, Joe called the florist to complain. The florist replied, "Sir, I'm really sorry for the mistake, but imagine this: SOMEWHERE there's a funeral taking place today, and they have flowers with a note saying, "Congratulations on your new location."

One day, God was looking down at Earth and saw all of the rascally behavior going on. So he called one of His angels and sent the angel to Earth.

When he returned, he told God, 'Yes, it is bad on Earth; 95% are misbehaving and only 5% are not.

God thought for a moment and said, 'Maybe I had better send down a SECOND angel to get another OPINION.'

So God called another angel and sent him to Earth.

When the angel returned he went to God and said, 'Yes, it's true. The Earth is in decline; 95% are misbehaving, and only 5% are being good.'

God was NOT PLEASED. So He decided to CALL the 5% that were good on the PHONE. God wanted to ENCOURAGE those 5% of good Christians, and give them a little something to help them keep GOING.

Do you know what God said?.....

Okay, I was just wondering, because I didn't get a call EITHER.

Well, that's all for today. But remember, you don't stop laughing because you grow OLD; you grow old BECAUSE you stop LAUGHING. So DON'T stop laughing. LAUGHTER is a GIFT from GOD. Amen.