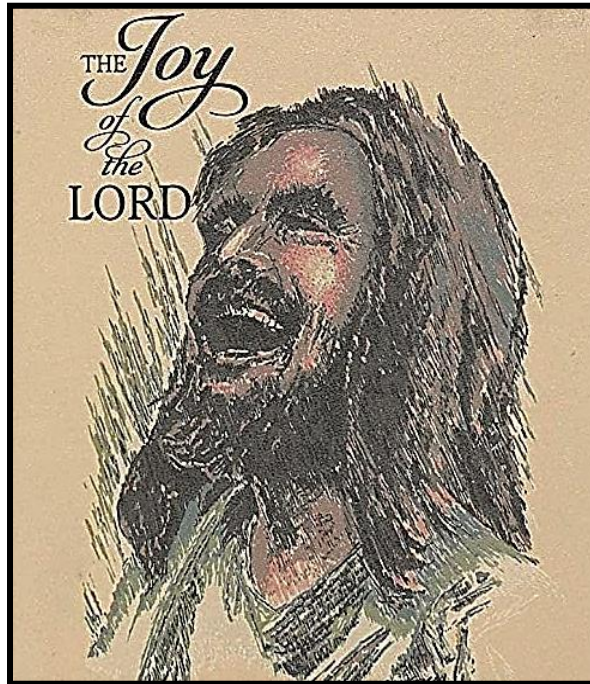


# SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

*Holy Humor Sunday*

*A Service of Word & Joy*

*April 19, 2020*



*The Laughing Christ*

**ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**85 E. Brandt Boulevard**

**Landisville, PA 17538**

*United in Christ,  
We are called to love and serve.*

# SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER

## *Holy Humor Sunday* *A Service of Word & Joy* *April 19, 2020*

### PRELUDE

*Hymn of Joy*

arr. by J. Innes/F. Winkels

### WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

In the name of Christ, I'd like to welcome you to worship on this first Sunday after Easter. It's a Sunday that over the centuries has gone by many names: The Second Sunday of Easter, Rejoicing Sunday, Laughter Sunday, Lighten Up Sunday, and, since 1988, Holy Humor Sunday.

Today we are going to celebrate Holy Humor Sunday complete with a special refrain sung throughout the service (Lutherans love to sing refrains, you know!). But before we begin the frivolity and fun of the day, I need to say something serious.

As your pastor, I realize that life isn't all one giant smile-fest. You may have things in your life, or in the life of our world, which are causing grief in your heart right now, and I respect that. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted." As Lutherans and Christians, we are people of paradox, so we know that sadness and joy can coexist in our hearts and in our world. Sometimes humor helps to give us strength in times of sadness. And in the cross and resurrection of Jesus, maybe – just maybe – we find the biggest example of how sadness and joy can mingle. So today, we celebrate the saving power of Christ, and the joy he gives us, even during this time of uncertainty and sadness around the world.

Having said that, it's time to brighten the mood by learning today's refrain. It goes like this:

**Ho-ho-ho ho-san-na!**

**Ha-ha ha-le-lu-jah!**

**Hee-hee-hee he saved me:**

**I've got the joy of the Lord!**

(James and some members of the choir will help us give this a whirl first; then we will join them.)

## **COMBINED CREED AND CONFESSION FOR HOLY HUMOR SUNDAY**

**We believe in God, who made us in his image.**

**We live, we love, we laugh, because we are like him.**

**We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Lord and Savior.**

**He had the last laugh on the devil when he rose from the dead.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, equal and eternal with the Father and the Son.**

**Our counselor, our guide, our motivator – he is our joy!**

**Forgive us, Lord, when we take ourselves too seriously, when we don't claim the happiness that is rightfully ours as your children, and when we forget you will have the last laugh in this world.**

**Restore for us the joy of your salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

## **PRAYER FOR HOLY HUMOR SUNDAY**

Let us pray. O God, grant us the grace to see ourselves as others see us - creatures of your making: wholly loved. In the craziness of today's world, awaken us to your presence in the smiles and glances we can only imagine during this time of isolation. Shape our hearts to delight in the gifts of each and every day. Through your precious son, we pray ... Amen.

## **HYMN**

### **DOWN IN MY HEART**

I have the joy, joy, joy, joy,

Down in my heart (Where?)

Down in my heart (Where?)

Down in my heart.

I have the joy, joy, joy, joy,

Down in my heart

Down in my heart to stay.

I have the love of Jesus, love of Jesus,

Down in my heart (Where?)

Down in my heart (Where?)

Down in my heart.

I have the love of Jesus, love of Jesus,

Down in my heart,

Down in my heart to stay.

I've got the peace that passes understanding  
Down in my heart (Where?)  
Down in my heart (Where?)  
Down in my heart.

I've got the peace that passes understanding  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart to stay.

I have the joy, joy, joy, joy,  
Down in my heart (Where?)  
Down in my heart (Where?)  
Down in my heart.

I have the joy, joy, joy, joy,  
Down in my heart,  
Down in my heart to stay.

## **A READING FROM GENESIS 18:1-15**

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, “My lord, if I find favor with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” So they said, “Do as you have said.” And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, “Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes.” Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

They said to him, “Where is your wife Sarah?” And he said, “There, in the tent.” Then one said, “I will surely return to you in due season, and your wife Sarah shall have a son.” And Sarah was listening at the tent entrance behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, “After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?” The LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, and say, ‘Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?’ Is anything too wonderful for the LORD? At the set time I

will return to you, in due season, and Sarah shall have a son.” But Sarah denied, saying, “I did not laugh”; for she was afraid. He said, “Oh yes, you did laugh.”

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

## **HUMOROUS INTERLUDES: SARAH VS. GOD**

So, what I can tell you about humor in the Bible? Well, it's found from the beginning to the end. Not only is the Bible full of puns and of images that provoke smiles as we hear them, we come to realize that God does have a sense of humor.

Think about Abraham's and Sarah's son Isaac. Isaac's name means "laughter". And what child of God is not a delight ... full of laughter and glee? (even when they may drive you ... well ... a little crazy. You parents know what I'm talking about.) But Isaac's arrival, the arrival of laughter - comes only after God insists on stretching our sense of belief - or should I say The Sense of Belief – the sense of faith that Abraham and Sarah had.

Feel it for a minute. Think of the inner dialogue here - as told by your favorite Jewish comedian: And I quote: "Hey – I'm 100 years old, and Sarah's ain't no spring chicken either. Yet you, God, decide to bless her. (Come on, what were you thinking?) Not only is she 90, but that woman has gone completely around the sun 90 times. I mean she's travelled so far, the Star Ship Enterprise will never catch up to her. There's no way what you're suggesting is possible. Why listen to her ... cackling away in the tent just thinking about it."

And we do hear in the scriptures how Sarah laughed at the whole idea – how she laughed at God - and then denied it - and we hear how God says to her, “Hey, Sarah, you did too laugh! And the laugh is on you because it's true. Yep, you're going to have a baby - just as I always said you would. So - it's a little late in life. Look at this way: Lots of people wonder if there's life after kids. In your case, at least there was life before kids! You're one lucky old lady! You know that, don't you Sarah? Sure you do!

I think we need a little musical refrain here. Ready?

*Refrain*

**Ho-ho-ho ho-san-na!**

**Ha-ha ha-le-lu-jah!**

**Hee-hee-hee he saved me:**

**I've got the joy of the Lord!**

## Now hear the tale of **THE POPE VS. THE RABBI**

It seems that the Pope, under pressure from all the Cardinals, decided that all the Jews had to leave Rome. Naturally there was a big uproar from the Jewish community. So the Pope made a deal. He would have a religious debate with a member of the Jewish community. If the Jew won, the Jews could stay in Rome. If the Pope won, the Jews would have to leave.

The Jews realized that they had no choice. So the elders of the people picked a respected Rabbi to represent them. The Rabbi was rather flamboyant in his expression, so they asked for one addition to the debate. To make it more interesting, and safer, neither side would be allowed to talk. The Pope agreed.

The day of the great debate came. The Rabbi and the Pope sat opposite each other for a full minute before the Pope raised his hand and showed three fingers. The Rabbi looked back at him and raised one finger.

The Pope waved his fingers in a circle around his head. The Rabbi energetically pointed to the ground.

The Pope pulled out a loaf of bread and a glass of wine and he broke the bread and ate, then sipped the wine. The Rabbi pulled out an apple and took a bite from it.

The Pope then stood up and said, "I give up. This man is too good. The Jews can stay in Rome as long as they want."

An hour later, the Cardinals were all around the Pope asking him what had happened.

The Pope said, "First I held up three fingers to represent the Trinity. He responded by holding up one finger to remind me that there was still one God common to both our religions. Then I waved my fingers around my head to show him that God was all around us and is Lord over the church. He responded by pointing to the ground and reminding me that God may be all around, but God was also right here with us and is God of the Jews as well as of the church. I broke bread and drank wine to show that God absolves us from our sins. The rabbi ate of the apple to remind me of original sin and how it still affects us. He had an answer for everything. What could I do?"

Meanwhile, the Jewish community had crowded around the Rabbi. "What happened?" they asked.

"Well," said the Rabbi, "First he said to me that the Jews had three days to get out of Rome. I told him that not one of us was leaving. Then he told me that this whole city would be cleared of Jews. I let him know that we were staying right here."

"And then?" asked a woman.

"I don't know," said Moishe. "He took out his lunch and I took out mine - and now we can stay as long as we want."

*Sing Refrain*

**Ho-ho-ho ho-san-na!**

**Ha-ha ha-le-lu-jah!**

**Hee-hee-hee he saved me:**

**I've got the joy of the Lord!**

### **A READING FROM 1 PETER 1:3-9**

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

### **ANOTHER INTERLUDE: THE JOYS OF GETTING OLD**

On this joyful day, I'd now like to share with you some of the **joys of old age** in light of the Reading from 1 Peter in which it states we are being protected by the power of God ... something truly necessary are we grow old. Listen ...

- Everything hurts, and what doesn't hurt doesn't work.
- The gleam in your eye is from the sun hitting your bifocals.

- Your “little black book” contains only names ending in MD.
- Your children begin to look middle-aged.
- You need your glasses to find your glasses.
- You sit in a rocking chair and can’t get it going.
- Your knees buckle but your belt won’t.
- Your back goes out more than you do.

And to that I say, let’s sing one more hearty refrain before we’re too old.

*Refrain*

**Ho-ho-ho ho-san-na!**

**Ha-ha ha-le-lu-jah!**

**Hee-hee-hee he saved me:**

**I’ve got the joy of the Lord!**

## **JUST ONE MORE SILLY SUNDAY STORY**

It was Saturday night. The minister had worked all week on a sermon but still had nothing, plus he was just sick of having to come up with something every week, and he wanted a week off ... he didn’t want to be in church the next day. Finally, he decided the heck with it. He called the council president, said he had come down with a terrible stomach flu so he couldn’t possibly do the service the next day, they’d just have to have a hymn sing or something. He got off the phone and thought, good; let ‘em see how they do without me.

He was a pretty good golfer so the next morning he got up early and drove to a golf course a hundred miles away where he was pretty sure no one would recognize him so he could spend a quiet day on the links.

Meanwhile, up in heaven, the angels were watching all this and talking among themselves until one said to Jesus, “Are you going to let him get away with that?” Jesus said, “No, I’m not.” The angels watched as the minister teed off on the first hole and suddenly, the wind picked up and blew the ball farther than he’d ever hit it before so it landed just short of the green, bounced a couple of times and then rolled straight into the hole. It was a 420-yard hole-in-one, by far the best shot the minister had ever made.

The angels were bewildered; they looked at Jesus and one of them said, "Why did you do that?" Jesus smiled and replied, "Who's he going to tell?"



## PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE FOR HOLY HUMOR SUNDAY

*Amid the laughter and celebration of this day, it's good that we pause and remember that many carry burdens that need not be carried alone.*

Let us pray. God of grace ... God of love and laughter: We thank you that we are so wondrously created and that we are made for a relationship with you and with one another. We thank you for humor and for laughter with friends and loved ones. We thank you for the laughter of children, and the song it creates in our hearts.

By your great unending love, you inspire in us a spirit of imagination and creativity. Help us to use that spirit to play more, to laugh more, and to create beauty in every way possible. Remind us to laugh out loud, for doing so will heal some of the wounds within us. Not all, but some.

God, we pray for those who cannot find their laughter today. For those who are grieving, or suffering illness of body, mind or spirit...for those who are lonely and in need of someone to share their time and friendship... for those who have not yet moved into the season and spirit of Easter and find themselves stuck in the gloom of Good Friday.

May these and the troubles of all your people be soothed, blessed, and comforted by your holy presence. May we each find the laughter within us that sets our spirits free, and in that freedom, may we take your love into every part of our lives. These and all the prayers of our hearts we offer now in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray together saying ...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

## HYMN

*Take Time to be Funny*

Sung to the tune of "Be Thou My Vision"

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, 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.

Old Sarah and Abraham – a child they lacked  
But God's angels promised, and she birthed Isaac  
In Hebrew that's "Laughter," you check if you want  
Genesis Seventeen is where it is found.

For humor is holy, it sanctifies life,  
Replenishes hope and oft softens advice  
It undercuts sorrow, deflates haughty pride  
So smile and hang on, rejoice in life's ride.

### **ON A SERIOUS NOTE**

There are many different ways of talking about the good news of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. Holy Humor Sunday was inspired by what some early church writers said about the resurrection: They said it was like a big joke played on the devil. When Jesus rose from the dead, they said, "God got the last laugh".

This is a pretty great way of talking about Jesus when you think about it. Sometimes people make it sound like God demanded Christ's suffering. I must say I take exception to that way of thinking about God. God never causes the suffering of any creature. God is not an abusive parent who requires the death of a child.

Thanks to the early Christians, we have a celebration with this healthy reminder: When Jesus crossed over from death to life, we received, once and for all, the good news that God suffers with those who suffer; and that when we are faced with evil and death, love and life will have the last word. This is the source of a joy which bubbles up into laughter. And to that I say, "Alleluia!" Praise be to God.

### **CLOSING PRAYER & SENDING FOR HOLY HUMOR SUNDAY**

Let us pray. Lord, grant us joyful hearts and a holy sense of humor. Teach us to live this moment only, looking neither to the past with regret nor to the future with apprehension. Let love be our guide, and our life a prayer.

And now:

Live each day with laughter and grace.  
Keep the Lord in your heart  
and a smile on your face.  
Amen.

**POSTLUDE**

*You Shall Go Out With Joy!*

D. Wagner



## **A FEW JOKES FOR HOLY HUMOR SUNDAY**

**Q: Why was Moses the most wicked man in the Bible?**

**A: Because he broke the Ten Commandments all at once.  
(Exodus 32:19)**

**Q: At what time of the day was Adam created?**

**A: A little before Eve.**

**Q: What man in the Bible had no parents?**

**A: Joshua, the son of Nun.**

**Q: Who was the most popular actor in the Bible?**

**A: Samson. He brought the house down**

## **HOLY HUMOR SUNDAY CARTOONS**



**GOOD NEWS!  
Laughter is the best medicine!**