



Introduction

Invitation

Call to Worship:

#1: Did Jesus laugh?

#2: Of course, Jesus laughed! I think . . .

#1: Maybe we need to laugh more!

#2: Laughter is supposed to be good for the soul.

#1: Then let us find laughter and joy in our worship!

Hymn: "Give to Us Laughter" written by Walter Farquharson

Reading the Word: Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Message: "We CAN Laugh"

Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

Prayer:

written by R. J. Fairchild, adapted

O God, we are thankful that in your wisdom you have given us a time in our lives for laughter, and that laughter and praise are ways in which you bring healing and wholeness to times that might otherwise seem dried up and lacking beauty or vitality. Thank you for the people you have sent into our lives to make us smile and laugh. We ask that you bring joy and hope, laughter and wholeness, rejoicing, and healing today and every day. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by 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. Amen.

Hymn: "How Great Thou Art"

Blessing



Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
Everything Has Its Time

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;

a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up;

a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance;

a time to throw away stones, and a time to gather stones together; time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing;

a time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away;

a time to tear, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace.



SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

Message “Give to Us Laughter”

Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh . . .” Ecclesiastes 3:1-4 (5-8 finishes this passage) (NRSV)

I don't know about you, but I have been greatly in need of some laughter these days. We all know what a toll that the pandemic has taken on us, and the “Black Lives Matter” have filled the news with images of peaceful protests as well as rioting. The list could go on and on, and sometimes in the midst of stressful and uncertain times, we need to take care of ourselves by finding a time to laugh.

My husband, Dave, and I have started watching old sitcoms, like MASH and The Golden Girls. They send strong messages, like the parables Jesus told, but they are sent with humor and help us to laugh. For about half an hour, we are transported to a new place and able to forget all that is affecting and infecting our world.

But it also made me wonder if Jesus laughed. Years ago, I saw a movie called “The Gospel Road,” presented by Johnny Cash. It was the story of Jesus from his birth to his resurrection and ascension. I have to admit that I don't really remember a lot of it except one scene where Jesus was playing on the beach with children. They splashed in the water, ran and laughed with joyful abandon, and I realized that we really don't see pictures of Jesus laughing.

So, did Jesus laugh? Of course, he did! He was human and lived a human life, including joy and sorrow, tears and laughter. When I looked up pictures of a laughing Jesus on line, I discovered that a number of artists had depicted him in a variety of ways: big smile, grinning, and even throwing his head back to laugh heartily.

I suspect there were many times when Jesus was teaching and telling his parables that he had a twinkle in his eye as he shared a story that was out of the box, like a camel going through the eye of a needle. We miss the humor often because Jesus taught using the images of his day, ordinary things and events that his listeners would have understood, but we often don't quite understand.

In our day, there are doctors who prescribe laughter as part of the healing process. Apparently, the laughter boosts our energy, helps us to relieve stress and so many other ways of helping us.

What makes you laugh? Knock-knock jokes? A comedy in the movies or on television? Watching your pets or your children when they are busy playing? Puns? I hope you will allow yourself some time to find what makes you laugh and then enjoy it!

I am not trying to avoid the seriousness of what is going on around us or to say it isn't important. What I hope we all will hear is that we need to offset the stress, anxiety, and challenges that our world creates by finding a balance in our lives. Humor - laughter - is an important part of it.

Let's try these - author unknown:

The Sunday School teacher was describing that when Lot's wife looked back at Sodom, she turned into a pillar of salt when Bobby interrupted. "My mommy looked back once while she was driving," he announced, "and she turned into a telephone pole."

Another Sunday School teacher said to her children, "We have been learning about how powerful the kings and queens were in Biblical times. But there is a higher power. Who can tell me what it is?" Tommy blurted out, "I know, Aces."

After explaining the commandment to honor your father and mother, a Sunday School teacher asked her class if there was a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters. One boy, the oldest in his family, immediately answered, "Thou shalt not kill."

(source: <https://www.swapmeetdave.com/Humor/Religious.htm>)

Whether they made you laugh or not, I hope you will find what does lift your spirits, and at least makes you smile. May you have a week that is full of good things to balance out the not-so-good-things! God bless you all as you take journey.