

Sermon: God is Laughing
Ecclesiastes 3:1-4, 1Corinthians 1:18-25

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Holy Humor, 2nd Easter, 4/3/16

Ecclesiastes 3:1-4

There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance

1Corinthians 1:18-25

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block for Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

Sermon

A time for everything. I grew up going to church almost every Sunday and I had to learn very early on how I was to act during the hour of worship. And my primary teacher was my mother's thumb and pointer finger, or what I lovingly like to think of as the pincers. When I wasn't sure if it was a time to talk, the pincer would remind it was a time for quiet. When I thought it might be a time to stand up and wiggle around, the pincer would remind me it was a time to sit still. When I considered laughing at the funny things in my own head, the pincer would remind me that worship was a time to be somber. So when someone first described Presbyterian worshipers as "The Frozen Chosen," I understood what they meant. So much of how we have worshiped God has been through somber prayers, quiet meditations, and thoughtful sermons. And there are good reasons for doing so, including the opportunity to seriously consider God's word and humbly come to God in prayer and respectfully allow others to worship even as we worship ourselves. But still, there is truth in the words, there is a season for every activity under heaven, and today is a day to laugh!

Why today, you ask. Well today is the second Sunday of Easter, a time where we continue to celebrate Christ's resurrection. Today we look into the empty tomb and hear the sound of God's laughter, we listen in the garden and feel God's smile. "He is not here, he is not dead, he is risen." Today we celebrate with laughter because of God's joke on death, on sin. "You thought that you had the last word, but how foolish you are in death, how weak you are in sin. For God's wisdom overcomes the wisdom of the world. And the cross is no longer a symbol of death but it represents new life, love that wins over sin.

Now if I were to guess, I would guess that Paul was a pretty straight laced guy, very serious and very intense in his faith and in his life. But even Paul recognizes that the message of God's good news seems foolish at first. God takes the expectations of the world, what we think would be wise and strong, and God turns it upside-down. To give us life, Christ died. To show us love, Christ endured our hate. To bring freedom, God did not take up arms or overthrow the Romans. To bring freedom, God became a man, finite and limited. The foolishness of God is more than the wise can grasp, more than the strong can handle. But for those of us who are being saved, Christ is the power of God and God's wisdom.

I am one who is carefully about telling jokes because I believe too often we laugh at someone instead of with them, we find levity in the pain of someone else. Humor has its limits, but humor also has its power. And if we are going to be fools for Christ, then we must foolishly proclaim Christ's good news believing in healing not hurt, building up and not destroying, freeing and not oppressing, acting as agents of change, and believing in the resurrection and in life and that love wins, always - it is foolishness, it is God's wisdom. Thanks be to God. Amen

The Baptism

A man, still struggling with the affects of a long Saturday night, stumbles upon a baptismal service on Sunday morning, down by the river. He proceeds to walk down into the water and stand next to the Preacher. The minister turns and notices the man and says, "Mister, are you ready to find Jesus?!" The man looks back and slurs, "Yes, preacher, I sure am." The minister then dunks the fellow under the water and pulls him right back up. "Have you found Jesus?!" the preacher asked. "No, I didn't!" the man said. So the preacher dunks him under for a bit longer, then brings him up and says, "Now, brother, have you found Jesus?" "No, I did not Reverend." The preacher in disgust hold the man under for at least 30 seconds this time, and bringing him out of the water he asked in a harsh tone, "How about now, tell me that you found Jesus!" The man wiped the water from his eyes and says to the preacher... "Are you sure this is where he fell in?"

Liars

A minister wound up the services one morning by saying, "Next Sunday I am going to preach on the subject of liars. And in this coming week, as a preparation for my discourse, I would like you all to read the seventeenth chapter of the book of Mark. On the following Sunday, the preacher rose to begin, and said, "Now, then, all of you who have done as I requested and read the seventeenth chapter of Mark, please raise your hands." Nearly every hand in the congregation went up. Then said the preacher, "you are the people I want to talk to. There is no seventeenth chapter of Mark."

Divid 'em Up

On the outskirts of town, there was a huge nut tree by the cemetery fence. One day two boys filled up a bucketful of nuts and sat down by the tree, out of sight, and began dividing the nuts. "One for you, one for me. One for you, one for me," said one boy. The bucket was so full, several rolled out toward the fence. Cycling down the road by the cemetery was a third boy. As he passed he thought he heard voices from inside the cemetery. He slowed down to investigate. Sure enough, he heard, "One for you, one for me. One for you, one for me." He knew what it was. "Oh, my!" he shuddered, "It's Satan and St. Peter dividing the souls at the cemetery!" He cycled down the road as fast as he could and found an old man with a cane, hobbling along. "Come quick!" said the boy. "You won't believe what I hear. Satan and St. Peter are down at the cemetery dividing the souls." The man said, "Shoo, you brat! Can't you see I'm finding it hard to walk as it is!" After several pleas, the man hobbled to the cemetery. Standing by the fence he heard, "One for you, one for me. One for you, one for me..." The old man whispered, "Boy, you've been telling the truth! Let's see if we can see the Devil himself." Shivering with fear, the peered through the fence, yet they were still unable to see anything. The old man and the boy gripped the wrought iron bars of the fence tighter and tighter as they tried to get a glimpse of Satan. At last they hear, "One for you, one for me. And one last one for you. That's all. Now let's go get those nuts by the fence, and we'll be done."

They say the old guy made it back to town five minutes before the boy.