

Natalie Bell
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 Holy Humor Sunday

No One Can Take Your Joy!
John 16:20-24

In John chapter 14-16, Jesus is telling his disciples that he will be going away to his Father. Jesus promises to send them an Advocate and Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to help them, comfort them, and remind them of all he taught. Then he talks about how their sorrow will turn to joy. He compares their pain to that of childbirth, a pain that will result in joy. Hear this word of the Lord for you today:

²⁰ Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. ²¹ When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. ²² So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. ²³ On that day you will ask nothing of me.^[c] Very truly, I tell you, if you ask anything of the Father in my name, he will give it to you.^[d] ²⁴ Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete.

There are some things ***other people cannot take away from you***, right?
 Like, Love, faith, learning, happy memories...

I was thinking about some of my ***best vacation memories*** this week, and by far it's a trip to Hawaii with Ed and my brother!
 It's why I was inspired to give out leis!
 My brother took us on that vacation,
 something more extravagant than we could ever afford.
 And it was beyond beautiful.
 The ocean, the flowers.....
 No one can take that from me.
 It's a happy place I can go to in my mind, when things are rough.

You know something else ***no one can take*** away from you? ***JOY***.
 We can ***allow people and circumstances*** to take away our happiness.
 We can ***give into feelings*** of despair, or bitterness.

But really—no one—can take our joy.
 Because Joy is so much *deeper*.
 And *joy is a gift* from God.

It's a gift *we really need*, isn't it?

We walk into church with *jobs* that stress us,
marriages that hurt us,
kids that rip our hearts out,
illnesses that threaten us,
parents that worry us,
finances that boggle the mind,
 and *losses* that break our hearts,
 and then we get here and God says:
REJOICE? Jesus says, have joy?
What?

How are we supposed to do that?
 Well, that's what this Sunday is all about—**Holy Humor**.
 It's the day when we celebrate the *joy of the resurrection!*
 And you know what it takes to have resurrection?
 It means that first, *something has died*.
Resurrection is new life, after the old life is destroyed.
 Think about that.
 That's powerful.
 Jesus died, that he might live, and help us live, forever.
 Because **Jesus lives, we can really live**.

When realize that about resurrection,
 we start to see how God's word about rejoicing and joy
 really does **apply to each one of us**, no matter what's happening!
 We all have something that **we have lost** in our lives, right?
 And **can't we all use some resurrection**,
 Some new life where there wasn't any?

So, just in case you're a bit down in the dumps today,
 how about we start with **something to make you smile, maybe even laugh?**

.....

A Catholic man had a heart attack and falls on the sidewalk of a city street. “Get me a priest” he cries out. The police officer asks if anyone is a priest and no one comes forward.

“I need a priest, please!” the dying man cried out.

Finally an elderly man stepped forward and said

“Officer, I am not a priest or a Catholic, but for many years I have lived next to a Catholic church and every night I listened to the Catholic litany, maybe I can be of some comfort.

The old man kneels down next to the dying man and says solemnly:

O-72, G-51, B-5, N-33 (that one’s for Phil!)

Show and Tell

A kindergarten teacher gave her class a “show and tell” assignment of bringing something to represent their religion.

The first child got in front of the class and said, “My name is Benjamin and I am Jewish and this is the Star of David.”

The second child got in front of her class and said, “My name is Mary, I am Catholic and this is the Crucifix.”

The third child got up in front of his class and said, “My name is Tommy and I am Presbyterian, and this is a casserole.”

Bragging about Dad

Three boys in the schoolyard were bragging about their fathers.

The first boy says, “My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he then calls it a *poem*, they give him \$50.00.”

The second boy says, “That’s nothing, My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a *song*, they give him \$100.00.”

The third boy says, “I got you both beat. My Dad scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, he calls it a *sermon*, and it takes eight people to collect all the money!”

Question: What do you get when you cross the Easter Bunny with an over-stressed pastor during Holy Week?

Answer: An Easter Basket Case

One Wish

A man walking along a California beach was deep in prayer when all of a sudden he said aloud, "**Lord grant me one wish**". The sky clouded and a booming voice said, "Because you have tried to be faithful I will grant you one wish." The man said, "**Build a bridge to Hawaii so I can drive over anytime I want to.**"

The Lord answered, "Your request is very materialistic. Think of the logistics of that; the supports required to reach the bottom of the Pacific; the concrete and steel it would take. I can do it, but it is hard for me to justify your desire for worldly things. Take **a little more time to think of another wish**, a wish you think would honor and glorify me".

The man thought for a long time and finally said, "**Lord, I wish that I could understand women**. I want to know what they feel, what they are thinking when they give me the silent treatment, why they cry, what they mean when they say 'nothing', and how to make her happy?"

After a few minutes God said, "**How many lanes do you want on that bridge?**"

Inspired

A boy was watching his father, a pastor, write a sermon. "How do you know what to say?" asked the little boy.

"Why, God tells me."

"Oh, then why do you keep crossing things out?"

A minister waited in line to have his car filled with gas just before a long holiday weekend. The attendant worked quickly, but there were many cars ahead of him in front of the service station. Finally, the attendant motioned him toward a vacant pump.

"Preacher," said the young man, "I'm sorry about the delay. It seems as if everyone waits until the last minute to get ready for a long trip."

The minister laughed, "I know what you mean. It's the same in my business."

.....
A priest, an evangelist, and a minister were in a rowboat in the middle of a pond fishing. None of them had caught anything all morning.

The *evangelist* stands up and says he needs to go to the bathroom so he climbs out of the boat and *walks on the water* to shore. He comes back ten minutes later the same way.

Then the *minister* decides he needs to go too, so he climbs out of the boat and *walks on the water* to shore. He, too, comes back the same way.

The *priest* looks at both of them and decides that his faith is just as strong as his fishing buddies and that he can walk on water, too. He stands up and as he steps out, he makes *a big splash down into the water*.

The evangelist looks at the minister and says, "I suppose we should have told him *where the rocks were*."

.....

Sometimes we need something funny!
And what better place to hear it, than in *church*!
Isn't this where we come to hear *GOOD news*?
Where we want to *receive JOY*?

Despite all the junk in our lives,
Don't we *want to have the joy that comes in and after pain*?
A joy that no one can take from us?

Listen again to Jesus words:

²² *So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.*

That's what we need—*a joy that no one can take away!*
A joy that happens, even in the *midst of and after* pain—
just like someone giving birth through pain....and then comes the joy!

And what if, these words—*Rejoice, and joy*,
What if they *don't* apply to our circumstances or our feelings,
What if God is *NOT* asking us to just 'see the glass half-full'
Or say, 'it's ok, everything is fine'.
But rather, in spite of it all,

What if it means we know *that God is with us*,
And God gives us the ability to rejoice,
And God gives joy—somehow, someway?
Regardless of what's going on, or how we feel.

Jesus was promising his followers the Holy Spirit when he said these words.
The *Spirit of God inside of us*—guiding, leading, comforting us.

Rejoice, means “be joyful”, it’s a Greek word *chairō*,
from the Greek *chara*—joy, and *charis*—grace.
It’s not something you just do, it’s a *gift*.

Joy is a gift from God.

It’s an amazing gift, of God’s *grace*.

And it’s a gift that comes *in the midst of and in spite of, pain*.
In fact, I’d argue that this gift of joy is *even deeper, the deeper the pain*.
The *depth* of sorrow can lead to a depth of joy.
A joy that no one can take from us!

We’ve probably all heard this before, but
Joy in the Bible is different than happiness.
Happiness can depend upon our circumstance, or our feelings.
Happiness is what the *world* wants for us.
Get this----be happy. Feel good.

Joy is something deeper, stronger, longer.
Joy is what ***God*** wants for us.
Joy is not based in our circumstances or feelings.
It is based ***in the Lord!***

It’s why Paul says ***rejoice in the Lord.***
Not in your situation.
Not in your feelings...because ***both may stink!***

This is why we heard the reading from ***Habakkuk*** today—
because joy can come to us,
even when everything appears hopeless.

Did you catch those amazing words from the prophet Habakkuk?
(do you realize there IS a prophet and a book named Habakkuk?
It’s pretty amazing!)

Though the fig tree does not blossom,
 and no fruit is on the vines;
 though the produce of the olive fails,
 and the fields yield no food;
 though the flock is cut off from the fold,
 and there is no herd in the stalls,
¹⁸ yet I will **rejoice** in the Lord;
 I will **exult** in the God of my salvation.
¹⁹ God, the Lord, is my strength;

Joy comes up **a lot in the Bible**, as you might guess.
 What you might not know is **when** it appears.
Jesus mentions joy in the **context** of pain,
 When talking about his death, and when he will leave them
 The **Psalms** talk about joy in the morning...
 after weeping in the night,
 and after mourning the loss of a loved one.
Lamentations talks about joy in the same breath
 that it laments the death of children.

Apparently **God is serious** about
 Joy not being related to circumstances, but **in spite of them**.
 Joy is **not** about knowing everything is all right,
 It's about knowing that **God is all right**.
God is good---all the time.

We can receive the gift of joy,
Especially in, the midst of pain.
 Now that's great news!

Haven't you ever **had to laugh**, because otherwise you'd just sit down and cry?
 Haven't you ever received the gift of something funny,
 while you feel down in the dumps?

Mark Twain once said, **The secret source of humor itself is not joy, but sorrow**.
 The writers of the Bible would agree.

I read another great quote:
*The sadnesses of life, far from discouraging **laughter**, actually **give rise to it**.*

I believe that.

That might be my excuse for such *a loud and obnoxious laugh*
(yes, I know that it can be heard from far far away..and you find me by it!),
I think it's because I have seen a lot of sorrow.
And the *depth of sorrow* often gives
a *greater capacity for laughter, and joy.*

I remember something funny that happened at my *Grandpa's graveside service.*
He was a funny, joyful man, who loved the Lord.
Always a smile, always laughter.
So it was very fitting that during a very serious part of his graveside service,
in the middle of a driving rainstorm,
as we are standing in front of his casket,
it starts to slide off the cart...and no one stops it...
We all just burst out laughing.
Because we knew he was probably laughing in heaven!

Ever felt giddy for no reason,
smiling when you should have been sobbing,
dancing when you were grieving,
laughing while crying?

We know that this happens!
Babies are born in the midst of tragedies.
Laughter is heard in oncology units,
Singing is a favorite pastime in nursing homes.

God gives us *joy and laughter as a gift*—especially when we *need it most.*

C.S. Lewis wrote a wonderful little book called
The Screwtape Letters ...about the Big Daddy Devil Screwtape writing to a Junior
Devil Wormwood about how to convert humanity and bring them to hell.
Quite an interesting read.

On the subject of **JOY**, The Big Devil Screwtape says this to the Junior Devil
Wormwood:

*I divide the causes of human laughter into **joy**, fun, joke and flippancy. You
will see the **JOY** among friends and lovers reuniting on the eve of a holiday.
...What the **real cause** of Joy is we do not know. Something like [this joy] is*

*expressed in much of that detestable art which humans call **music**, and something like it occurs in **heaven**.*”

*[joy,] to us it is a meaningless acceleration in the rhythm of celestial experiences..... Laughter of this kind does us **no good** and should always be **discouraged**. Besides, the phenomena is of itself disgusting and a direct insult to the realism, dignity and austerity of hell.”*

C.S. Lewis wrote that "**Joy is the serious business of heaven**,
The grand truth.
The **surprise** that happens when we discover God's love."
Doesn't that sound like something we need today?

So, when does this gift of grace happen?
It can happen, **ANYTIME**—because the Lord is always near us!
It can happen when we are alone, or lonely.
And it can happen in the company of **others**,

Joy is often experienced with other believers.
Paul wrote about the **joy of fellowship** with other believers.
So this is one reason we're here today—
We're here to **experience the joy** of fellowship!
We're also here to **open our hearts to the joy** of the Lord!
We're here to rejoice because **God is good---all the Time!**

But when we leave this place,
We also can **make room for joy**.
And all the times it appears in our lives!

It comes when we are **AMAZED** by the glory of God,
In a child's smile, a roaring ocean, a sensational sunset
Any moment that can only be described as a **God-sighting!**

Joy comes from being **thankful**...
Joy comes when we are **aware** of God's presence all around us.
When we are **with** other believers in fellowship, worship, study, and prayer.
Joy comes from being **near** the Lord in God's WORD and PRAYER
Joy comes when we **think** about the **good things**,
like whatever is pure, and honorable, noble, and holy....

We see thousands of negative images every day.
So what if we ***put something positive*** in our minds?
What if we opened our hearts---***to rejoicing, and joy?***

Friends, hear the ***Good News*** of the Gospel
Joy is one of the greatest gifts we can receive,
Regardless of our feelings or our circumstance.
Laughter and rejoicing are gifts of grace in the middle of pain.
And they come from the fact that ***Jesus is alive!***
Because He lives, we can live!
And for that, all God's people said, Amen.