

**Devotion:** Friday, March 27, 2020 --- A little different

DEVOTIONAL SERVICE FOR ADAMS BASIN AND SPENCERPORT UMC  
March 27<sup>th</sup> 2020

*Laughter is the closest thing to the grace of God.--Karl Barth.*

Opening prayer:

L: Wash your hands. Soap is to the body what laughter is to the soul.

**P: Wash your hands: Only you can prevent the zombie apocalypse.**

L: Wash your hands: Mom said so.

**P: Don't be a dope. Wash your hands with water and soap.**

L: Don't be dirty. Please be neat. Wash your hands before you eat.

**P: Don't be a bum; wash off the scum.**

**ALL: Whether you're an adult, kid or teen, washing your hands is good hygiene.**

**Opening Hymn: "Take Time to Be Holy"**

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, for 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.*

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

**Scripture Reading**                      **John 11:1-45** (*Go look it up, it's too long for emailing*)

As I was researching for this week's Sunday message, I came upon this little tidbit from my college days that I had forgotten about. The American playwright, Eugene O'Neill, had written a story about what Lazarus' remaining years might have been like after Jesus raised him from the dead. It's a play called, *Lazarus Laughed*.

This play is hardly ever performed: not because it's not a good work, but because its staging presents so many logistical difficulties. *Lazarus Laughed* requires a huge cast — more than 150 people and 400 costumes. All the characters, except for one, are expected to wear specially-designed masks of ancient Greek choruses.

The one character who doesn't wear a mask is Lazarus. This is because he's the only human being — except for Jesus — who's ever gone down to the dead and returned. Lazarus has come back, O'Neill is saying, somehow wiser and somehow more of a whole human being than anyone else on stage.

In the play, one character describes what he saw that day Lazarus was raised:

"I helped to pry away the stone so I was right beside him. I found myself kneeling, but between my fingers I watched Jesus and Lazarus. Jesus looked into his face for what seemed a long time and suddenly Lazarus said 'Yes' as if he were answering a question in Jesus' eyes."

"Yes?" ask the members of the chorus. "What could he mean by yes?"

The witness continues:

"Then Jesus smiled sadly but with tenderness, as one who from a distance of years of sorrow remembers happiness. And then Lazarus knelt and kissed Jesus' feet, and both of them smiled and Jesus blessed him and called him 'My Brother' and went away; and Lazarus, looking after him, began to laugh softly like a man in love with God! Such a laugh I never heard! It made my ears drunk! It was like wine! And though I was half-dead with fright I found myself laughing, too!"

Later, some characters ask Lazarus why he is laughing.

His response: "There is only life! I heard the heart of Jesus laughing in my heart; 'There is Eternal Life in No,' it said, 'and there is the same Eternal Life in Yes! Death is the fear between!' And my heart reborn to love of life cried 'Yes!' and I laughed in the laughter of God!"

"Laugh!" cries Lazarus. "Laugh with me! Death is dead! Fear is no more! There is only life! There is only laughter!"

In these bad news days, I pray that you can laugh at some point in the day. Watch a stupidly funny movie. Read the comics. Write down the things that make you laugh and go back to them next time you come home from the grocery store with no toilet paper, again. And then think about why all this toilet paper is suddenly vanishing before our very eyes, as if toilet paper were the answer to all of our problems, and maybe it is, who knows?

But I do know that our Awesome God will get us through this. And that day will be a hoot!

### **Closing Hymn: "The Church's One Foundation"**

We lack the gift of laughter; faith sits all pale and glum,  
Hope dozes on a rafter, and love is stricken dumb  
Come, Christ, into our drabness, tell us that matchless jest  
of life and resurrection, your sweetest and your best.

*We know the trick of tumbling, red nose and redder face;*

*by virtues of our bumbling ours is the jester's case.  
Come, Christ, come down immortal, teach us that matchless jest  
of life and resurrection, your sweetest and your best.*

You joined our sad profession, made good our foolishness,  
brought clowning into fashion, put on our joker's dress.  
Come, Christ, come holy laughter, to share that matchless jest  
of life and resurrection, your sweetest and your best.

*Upon a foolish cross, Lord, you hung to make us mirth;  
but there you conquered loss, Lord, old death became new birth.  
Come everlasting joy; Christ, confirm that matchless jest  
of life and resurrection, your sweetest and your best.*

*Benediction:*

*Smile through you tears and sorrows, smile and maybe tomorrow the sun will come shining  
through, for you, if you smile-----Thanks Frank*