

Shiloh United Methodist Church

John 20:19-31

Rev. Tyler Amundson

April 8, 2018

The God We Can Know: Knowing God

Worship Opener:

Today is Holy Humor it is about laughs and belly laughs, it is about reminding us that resurrection included a bodily resurrection of Christ and that means matter, matters to God. It is about having hope over death and a laugh in the next moment is as likely as a tear.

So today to begin worship we are going to start with a few jokes.

Two boys were walking home from Sunday school
after hearing a strong preaching on the devil
One said to the other, 'What do you think about
all this Satan stuff?'
The other boy replied, 'Well, you know how
Santa Claus turned out.
It's probably just your Dad.'

A little girl, dressed in her Sunday best, was running
as fast as she could,
trying not to be late for Bible class.
As she ran she prayed,
'Dear Lord, please don't let me be late! Dear Lord,
please don't let me be late!'
While she was running and praying, she tripped
on a curb and fell,
getting her clothes dirty and tearing her dress.
She got up, brushed herself off, and started running
again!
As she ran she once again began to pray,
'Dear Lord, please don't let me be late. But please

don't shove me either!"

"A kindergarten teacher gave her class a "show and tell" assignment. Each student was instructed to bring in an object that represented their religion to share with the class.

The first student got up in front of the class and said, "My name is Benjamin and I am Jewish and this is a Star of David."

The second student got up in front of the class and said, "My name is Mary. I'm a Catholic and this is a Rosary."

The third student got up in front of the class and said, "My name is Tommy. I am Methodist, and this is a casserole.""

Sermon:

Started with a video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLSIHYbedII>

Three boys are in the school yard bragging about their mothers.

The first boy says, 'My mother scribbles a few words on a piece of paper, she calls it a poem, they give her \$50.'

The second boy says, 'That's nothing. My mother scribbles a few words on piece of paper, she calls it a song, they give her \$100.'

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

"I am the resurrection and the life." is the phrase we are going to look at one more time as we wrap up the I Am series.

These are the words shared in the Gospel of John. This is the last of the "I Am" statements we have been studying throughout Lent and into Easter. This is the last Sunday of "I Am" statements and today we are

not going to focus much on this “I Am” in context. Instead I want to struggle together with this idea of resurrection.

We have explored the “I Am” sayings of Jesus during Lent and today is the last Sunday of looking at these statements.

Today we are going to explore resurrection. Resurrection is something we get all excited about at Easter. In our excitement, sometimes many of us forget that resurrection is a principle of Christianity that applies to our lives throughout the year. More importantly, God demonstrates through resurrection that God cares about our whole being. Knowing God is to know God cares about each and every part of creation, and that means each and every one of us.

Before I share our scripture let me share this about Holy Humor Sunday. Holy Humor is the tradition of the church to celebrate how resurrection had the last laugh over the death. It is quite literally a day to have fun, play jokes, and recognize that God is one who laughs with us at the way hope and resurrection overcome the darkest death in our lives. It is a day to celebrate that resurrection helps us share the light of God’s grace and love. So, that is why this day is crazy and fun for us, because we are celebrating the hope of resurrection.

The gospel reading today comes from the book of John. Prior to this reading the disciples have experienced the execution of Jesus, and their own deep fear about what is next. Other disciples have denied Jesus. Then Jesus dies and they seem to lose all hope. And suddenly on the third day as they go to prepare the body the women disciples discover Jesus is gone, and are told Jesus has been resurrected. The men of course don’t believe the women for reasons beyond understanding, because as usual the women were correct. Then Jesus begins

appearing to the disciples.

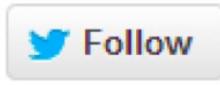
The scripture for the day is below, we told it in worship through a series of Tweets between the disciples, Mary and Jesus.



EASTER TWITTER LESSON



VirginMother14
@VirginMother14

**Missing Jesus #romesucks
#againstdeathpenalty #mourning**

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3:05 am - 20 April 30 AD · Embed this Tweet



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@VirginMother14



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Don't worry mom @virginmother14 I am
back ask @Marym3415 #ressurectionrocks
#Godpulledthrough

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6:05 AM - 20 April 30 AD · Embed this Tweet



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Don't worry mom @virginmother14 I am back ask @Marym3415 #ressurectionrocks #Godpulledthrough

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SimonPeterRooster&Run3

@SimonPeterRooster&Run3



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@Judassilver30 did you steel Jesus' smartphone? #crueltricks #meanpeople

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Stopping by the upparoom tonight don't
miss it #blastfromyourpast
#Godswatching #ressurectionhappens

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12:30 PM - 20 April 30 AD · Embed this Tweet



undecidedThomas65

@undecidedThomas65



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stuck in livestock traffic again
**#missingthebigstuff #waitformejesus
#stinkingsheep**

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5:00 PM - 20 April 30 AD · Embed this Tweet



ChristSuperStar7

@ChristSuperStar7



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@undecidedthomas65 convinced now?
#handinmyside #somepeople
#cantwaitforascension
#theywillneverbelieveit

Reply Retweet Favorite More

8:00 PM - 20 April 30 AD · Embed this Tweet



SimonPeterRooster&Run3

@SimonPeterRooster&Run3



Follow

real deal Jesus is back if you don't believe
have faith #hopeisalive #calledbygod

Reply Retweet Favorite More

5:05 PM - 20 April 30 AD · Embed this Tweet

John 20:19-31 - NRSV

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

19 When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” **20** After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. **21** Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” **22** When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Jesus and Thomas

24 But Thomas (who was called the Twin[c]), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

26 A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” **27** Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” **28** Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” **29** Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

The Purpose of This Book

30 Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. **31** But these are written so that you may come to believe[d] that Jesus is the Messiah,[e] the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

This passage is an excellent example on resurrection because of Thomas. Thomas is one of my favorite disciples. I would encourage all of us in our study of the scriptures to find a disciple you identify with, because often they have something great to teach us about our connection to God. Thomas in this case demonstrates we are all at a different phase of trust in what God is showing us. Thomas is like myself and I would say many of us, God prove it to me that following Jesus and being a part of God's ministry brings hope. "Prove it to me by letting me touch you. Prove to me that resurrection is possible."

Thomas doesn't trust the resurrection and needs Jesus to prove it to him. Then the gospel says, "**29** Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe." In the past, I have read this passage as, "The people that understand resurrection without questioning God are more blessed." However, I think it says something very different. Instead it clearly says, "All of us as followers of Jesus are going to need different ways and levels of proof to understand the hope of resurrection." We are all going to need our own experiences of God to be able to embrace the hope that Easter promises.

A woman named Rachel sat at her computer pouring over articles of an event she had just experienced. After the event, she had found herself wandering the city in a tearful euphoria, overwhelmed by the event itself. She read every story she could find about the event, studied the website of the organization who created the event. She had even earlier that day called in to take a day off of work to experience the event. What was this feeling she had inside of her, and how would she

change her life to meet it?¹

I will share the event that had Rachel questioning her existence in a minute. Before I do I want to come back to humor. Humor is a great way to understand where Rachel is coming from, this heightened emotional and internal reflection she is experiencing is something similar to what happens to us when we experience a joke or humor.

Think for a minute about the visceral reaction of humor or not finding humor. If we think something is funny it is almost impossible to hold in a laugh, it is as if your body needs to expel the laugh. If people laugh around us, then we generally want to laugh. Unless of course the thing everyone is laughing at is something we are largely concerned about, or the laughing seems hurtful to us. Even if we don't like the laughing our choice not to laugh feels bodily in the same way the laugh does.

Humor and laughing become a grand example about how some people will understand experiences in a certain way and others might not. The same realities that apply to humor, also apply to our faith. Some of us will need certain things to connect to understandings of God, and others of us will need different experiences to come to know the same God.

Barbara Brown Taylor is a priest and biblical scholar. I am going to share a video with us in which she talks about the aspect of matter and flesh in resurrection. This video really is about how God cares about the whole of us. As we hear her words about our body and resurrection I want us to listen for what "matters to God."

¹ Rogers, F. J. (2016). *Compassion in practice: The way of jesus*. Place of publication not identified: Abingdon.

(Barbara Brown Taylor Video on the reality that flesh and all of who we are matter to God.) - <http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/matter-matters>

Our scripture today is another reminder that “matter matters” to God. Thomas questions the resurrection and Jesus replies, “Go ahead Thomas I will let you put your hand in my side if it will help you believe in the hope of resurrection.” I almost wish Jesus had said, “And go ahead and tickle me too.” We need to know that God cares about us from our toes to our nose and from our soul to our spirit. Jesus’ words in this passage remind us that God wants to provide us each a chance to know that God cares for us and that Jesus walks alongside of us as we experience life.

Part of the life experience God hopes for us is laughter. Laughter couldn’t happen if we were not these amazing created beings that we are. It takes those physical responses I shared earlier to experience laughter and laughter actually is a useful tool to help us understand and grow in our lives. Laughter physically helps our brains interpret and understand information. I found this quote from an article about laugh studies in the United Kingdom.

"Smiling and laughing are indices of our understanding of the world. Adults laugh at something when they find it surprising or unusual; it is exactly the same for babies," a researcher explains. "Finding out what makes infants laugh teaches us more generally about how humans

understand and respond to the world around them, and also the ways in which that can change."²

Laughter is the social and verbal tool we use to incorporate the strange and unusual things in our world into our understanding. When we laugh at something we are attempting to understand it. Laughter then becomes physical hope that we can reach to new understanding. Laughing at the resurrection is a spiritual practice of reaching out to understand God. Understanding the resurrection involves risking to reach out to Jesus directly in hopes that we can trust the reality of resurrection. The reality of resurrection is God brings hope into our everyday lives.

Aristotle believed we did not truly become “human beings” until we laughed for the first time.³ I don’t know if this is true. I do know that we cannot be complete in our lives without laughter, and this is especially true if it really does help our understanding of the world around us. As people of the resurrection we have to learn to laugh to really begin to understand resurrection in our lives. In other words we have to learn that the emotions, the feelings of our body matter to resurrection. The matters of this life matter to God, and can be a part of what shapes our understanding of God and God’s love in our lives.

Back to the event that got Rachel’s attention and got her to take a day off of work, but first the backstory.

² <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/science/revealed-the-serious-science-behind-a-babys-laugh-8225400.html>

³ <http://www.radiolab.org/story/91589-is-laughter-just-a-human-thing/>

Miles Scott was 5-year-old boy from Tulelake, California. He was a young boy who was too young to know of any villainy, or he should have been. His small town was far from any metropolitan area.⁴

Except Miles as a infant suffered from pain, fevers, and no appetite. When he was eighteen months old he was diagnosed with lymphoblastic leukemia, a rare form of blood cancer and can be fatal in weeks if left untreated.

As you can imagine Miles early childhood was consumed by his parents holding vigil by his bedside, his father a hay farmer and his young mother. They together faced the rounds of doctors, needles, treatments, scans, and the gambit of things that comes from facing off with cancer.

Through all of this he and his father began watching batman. Not any of the new batman cartoons or shows, the classic Adam West Batman with the “pows” and “kapoos” that happened when the characters hit a bad guy.

At age 5 Miles was granted a Make-A-Wish dream to get to become “Batkid” for a day. He and his dad went to San Francisco and as directed by the organizers they turned on their hotel room TV in the morning at 8am. To their surprise the newscasters were reporting villains had taken over parts of the city. The chief of police for San Francisco came on and said, “Batman we need your help and please bring Batkid!”

Miles dad turned to him and said, “Miles I think that means you.”

⁴ Rogers, F. J. (2016). *Compassion in practice: The way of jesus*. Place of publication not identified: Abingdon.

They rushed to the lobby of the hotel to see Batman standing next to a Lamborghini emblazed with the Batman logo. Batman was holding an amazingly intricate Batkid costume he handed to Miles. After a quick stop in the restroom to change Miles and Batman jumped in the car and headed to stop the first act of villainy.

They arrived on scene to find a woman strapped to a bomb on the tracks with a cable car on the horizon. As Batkid got out he was a little overwhelmed. He paused for a moment, but Batman reminded him that there was a woman in danger. Batkid clenched his fists and ran towards the danger. Freeing the woman and deactivating the bomb resulted in a hug from the rescued women to which Batkid patted her on the shoulder.

Hundreds and even thousands began to gather and cheer, "Batkid."

Taking it all in Miles realized Batman was gesturing him back to the car for Riddler had been seen going into the financial district. They arrived at a bank, and Batkid ran inside and without hesitation apprehended the Riddler and handed him over to the police.

The two heroes took a quick break from their grueling day for Burgers and Fries. A crowd continued to gather and chant for Batkid. However, there was no time to sit with fans, for the Penguin had taken the local sports mascot hostage and was holding him in the stadium. Batkid drove to rescue the Mascot and then found himself on the steps of City Hall, being handed a key to the city from the mayor of San Francisco.

Thousands numbered the crowds that day, all cheering for Batkid, and even President Obama sent a special message congratulating Batkid.

Rachel found herself in a coffee shop after wandering the streets in tears. She looked up Make-A-Wish, and read hundreds of articles about the day's events. Not realizing the day was moving into night, she looked up and wondered what she would do next with her life. She wouldn't necessarily leave her job, but the day had taught her something was missing.

Resurrection is our reminder of what is missing, God needs our whole being to accomplish the final act of humor over that which overpowers love and life.

Here is the challenge that we need to take from Holy Humor Sunday into our everyday lives. Resurrection is a reminder that knowing God means we know that our whole being matters to God. Laughing is our God given gift to help us remember that it takes all of us to laugh and make it through this crazy life. We are invited to go from this place and laugh our way into hope. Holy humor becomes a chance to laugh our way into understanding the resurrection, to use our whole being to live again.

This week, I hope you can find your own time to laugh, cry, or feel whatever feeling you are being called to have. Because God needs our whole beings to live out faith and love in this world.

We are resurrection people. Though we find the truth about resurrection in different ways, it is our task to find and share the resurrection hope in our lives each day. Even if it means like Thomas we have to tickle Jesus to remind ourselves that resurrection is real.

For Communion:

Is there anything more foolish than to believe
we can be made whole by Jesus' brokenness?
Is there anything that looks more silly
than to think a common cup can hold grace?
Yet, in the wisdom of your foolish ways,
the ordinary, the everyday become the sacred,
the barren can bring forth new life,
we can reach out a finger and be grasped
by that love which will never let go.
So, as your Spirit is poured out
on the gifts of the Table,
as the bread and cup renew your foolish people,
send us forth to be bearers of joy to the broken,
to be the bread of hope to all who hunger,
to be laughter and light to all who live in shadows.
