

**Sermon “The Second Table” Luke 24:13-35 Easter 2 April 24, 2022**  
**Rev. Steve Clifton Rideau Park United Church, Ottawa ON**

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson decide to go on a camping trip. After dinner and some time by the campfire, they lay down for the night, and go to sleep.

Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend.

"Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see."

Watson replied, "I see millions of stars."

"What does that tell you?" Holmes asked

Watson pondered for a minute.

"Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets."

"Astrologically, I observe that Saturn is in Leo."

"Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three."

"Theologically, I can see that God is in his heaven and that we are small and insignificant."

"Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow."

"What does it tell you, Holmes?"

Holmes was silent for a minute, then spoke: "Watson, you idiot. Someone has stolen our tent!"

Today is Holy Humour Sunday, also called *Laughter Sunday*, *Hilarity Sunday*, *God's Laughter Sunday*, *Bright Sunday* or *Holy Fools Sunday* and it has its roots in a number of different Christian traditions.

For example, Churches in 15<sup>th</sup> century Bavaria used to celebrate the Sunday after Easter as *Risus Paschalis* (Latin for 'God's Joke,' or 'the Easter laugh'). Priests would deliberately include amusing stories and jokes in their sermons in an attempt to make the faithful laugh. It was their way of celebrating the resurrection of Christ – the supreme joke God played on death and darkness in raising Jesus from the dead. At Easter, God laughs last and best

The observance of *Risus Paschalis* was officially outlawed by the dour Pope Clement X in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. In recent years it's had a resurgence.

Maybe we could use a little lightness. American author Ann Lamott shares the things that weigh on her at the moment. "God, what a world. What a heartbreaking, terrifying freak show.

Ukraine, Sandy Hook, melting permafrost...Marjorie Taylor Greene. Really, to use the theological terms, it is just too frigging much."

Here in Ottawa we might add to Anne`s list: the 6<sup>th</sup> wave of a 2 year pandemic, coming at the end of a second pandemic winter; the losses suffered and the energy drained from two COVID years...May be we could use some joy.

What do you call a bunny that doesn't like Easter? A hare-etic

What's a dentist's favorite hymn? Crown him with many crowns.

What kind of car would Jesus drive? A Christler.

Where is Solomon`s temple? It's in the side of his head.

Holy Humour coincides today with our coming to the table to share bread and cup. We can remember that the table we come to is a table of joy. Sharing together in this sacrament is meant to lift our spirits, to remind us of good news, to inject some hope into us. When we come to the table today, we are coming to the second table of the Easter story

Remember the first table of Easter narrative? The Last Supper. It's the eve of betrayal, Holy Thursday, the night before Good Friday's darkness, Jesus shares body and blood in remembrance. That table might be a somber one. And often we come to the table in great solemnity, with a practiced seriousness.

But then there is the second table in the story. It's after Easter. Jesus returns to the Upper Room and shows that he lives. Imagine the joy of this reunion table. Christ broken and crucified is now Jesus resurrected and alive.

In the reading Jeanette shared we hear the story of the Table in Emmaus on Easter night. It's like the greatest of surprise parties, only the guest surprises the hosts. Jesus is recognized as bread is broken. Bread is broken and eyes are opened to hope and life. Surprise! Jesus lives!

We come to that second table, the Easter table today and there the risen Jesus welcomes us. It's a table of resurrection joy that we share. This is not a solemn gathering but a celebration, a dinner party, a reunion feast,

Diana Butler Bass points out that while the second table, Easter's table is a place of joy, the first table, the gathering on Holy Thursday, the Last Supper, was more joyful than we make it out to be. She writes that while we think of the Last Supper as a "doomed man's final meal while the execution clock ticks.... his friends didn't experience it that way. They were celebrating Passover. They were in Jerusalem with friends and family at a big, busy, bustling holiday meal to

commemorate God freeing their ancestors from slavery. Passover is a joyful meal, not a somber one”.

Rabbi Harold Kushner describes Sabbath meals in his home:

*The laughing. The sharing. And the singing. One melody is scarcely spent when another comes forward. We don't even notice the racket of the children. There is a great holiness in this room. It grows with the sharing. {I take a large ceramic Kiddush cup, fill it with wine, offer it to my wife and then to the man next to me, who} hands it to his wife with the solemn instruction, "Here, keep it going." And we do. From hand to hand. Drunk from and refilled. Time and time again...*

As we come to the table together on this second Sunday of the Easter season, on Holy Humour Sunday, may we know the presence of the Risen Christ who invites us to his table so that we might taste joy and be filled to overflowing with Easter's hope.

...A man had been lost and walking in the desert for about 2 weeks. One hot day, he sees a monastery. Tired and weak, he crawls up to the structure and collapses on the doorstep. The monks find him and nurse him back to health. Feeling better, the man asks the abbot for directions to the nearest town. The abbot offers something better. He offers his horse who knows the way and the way back again.

The abbot says, "But there is a special thing about this horse. I trained it. You have to say 'Thank God' to make it go and 'Amen' to make it stop."

Not paying much attention, the man says, "Sure, ok."

So he gets on the horse and says, "Thank God" and the horse starts walking. Then he says, "Thank God, thank God," and the horse starts trotting. Feeling really brave, the man says, "Thank God, thank God, thank God, thank God, thank God" and the horse just takes off. Pretty soon he sees this cliff coming up and he's doing everything he can to make the horse stop.

"Whoa, stop, hold on!!!!"

Finally he remembers, "Amen!!"

The horse stops 4 inches from the cliff edge. Then the man leans back in the saddle and says with great relief, "Thank God."