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HOLY LAUGHTER

Disclaimer: this is NOT a normal Sunday at Mayflower. We don't normally dress like this, and we don't normally have dunk tanks on the church lawn where our kids gleefully wait through the service for a chance to dunk the minister (or this year for the first time, the ministers—plural, thank you Jesus). And I certainly don't make a habit of telling jokes from this pulpit in lieu of a sermon—that is, except for the first Sunday in June, on what we call at Mayflower, Holy Humor Sunday.

My biggest concern of course is that we may have visitors—whose only experience with Mayflower happens to fall on this day. I mean, just imagine that someone wanders in here for the first time looking for a word of encouragement, a word of hope, a serious and solemn experience of the presence of God and the wisdom of the gospel—and they get this! It happens you know. Someone mentioned just the other day that last year they finally persuaded a friend of theirs, a southern Baptist, to attend Mayflower, and it just happened to be on Carnival Sunday, and underneath my robe I was wearing a black t-shirt that read: JESUS IS COMING BACK: Look Busy! Now, let's face it--that person may never come back.

But then let's face it, life is inherently risky, and I'd rather set aside the cares of the world for one Sunday and laugh than worry about someone who may fear that we don't take the world and everyone in it seriously enough. Believe me, we do. We talk about, pray about, and sing about lots of very important things in this church, but everybody needs a break. Everyone needs to laugh. I think laughter is a beautiful sound, holy, and yes--even pleasing to God. I've often wondered if Jesus ever laughed. I'll bet he did.

So here's how this works, if you are a new member or a sympathetic visitor. On Holy Humor Sunday, the covenant is very simple, and very important. 1) I tell the jokes. 2) You laugh at the jokes. Number two is especially important. If you can't laugh, then groan. Some of these are groaners, like "What do you call a bear with no teeth?" A gummy bear!

Some of these jokes are politically incorrect, so I will ask for forgiveness in advance. And most of them are about what foolish creatures that we are, how differently men and women see the world, and about the sin of taking ourselves much too seriously most of the time. Are you ready?

Let's begin with marriage—which I understand is apparently a major cause of divorce. They say that if love is blind, marriage is a real eye-opener. Take the man who said, "My wife says I never listen, or something like that."

While attending a marriage seminar that same man was working on his communication skills. Tom and his wife Grace listened to the instructor. "It is essential that husbands and wives know each other's likes and dislikes. He turned to Tom and said, "Can you name you wife's favorite flower?" Tom leaned over, touched his wife's arm gently and whispered, "It's Pillsbury, isn't it?"

Of course it is also important that in a good marriage, various duties are spelled out and there is no misunderstanding about who does what. One couple was arguing over who should brew the coffee each morning. The wife said, "You should do it because you get up first, and then we don't have to wait as long to get our coffee. The husband replied, "You are in charge of cooking around here and you should do it, because that is your job, and I can just wait for my coffee."

The wife grew impatient and said sternly, "No, you should do it, and besides, it is in the Bible that the man should do the coffee."

"It's in the Bible is it? I don't believe that, show me."

Whereupon the woman fetched a Bible, and opened the New Testament and showed him at the top of several pages that it indeed says, HEBREWS.

OK, moving on to puns. A vulture boarded an airplane, carrying two dead raccoons. The stewardess looks at him and says, "I'm sorry, sir, only one carrion allowed per passenger."

Two hydrogen atoms meet. One says, "I've lost my electron." The other says, "Are you sure?" The first replied "Yes, I'm positive."

A woman delivers a set of identical twins and decides to give them up for adoption. One of them goes to a family in Egypt and is named "Ahmal." The

other goes to a family in Spain; they name him “Juan.” Years later, Juan sends a picture of himself to his birth mother. Upon receiving the picture, she tells her husband that she wishes she also had a picture of Ahmal. Her husband responds, “They’re twins! If you’ve seen Juan, you’ve seen Ahmal.”

Mahatma Gandhi, as you know, walked barefoot most of the time, which produced an impressive set of calluses on his feet. He also ate very little, which made him rather frail and, with his odd diet, he suffered from bad breath. This made him (are you ready), “a super calloused fragile mystic hexed by halitosis.”

Enough puns. Let us move to the 2010 Darwin Awards, named in honor of a man who believed in survival of the fittest, and that means, of course also the smartest. Nature has a way of thinning out the herd, and these are true stories of some of the dimmer bulbs in the human tree; these people are one brick short of a load; or to put it simply, if you put their brains into a thimble they’d rattle like road apples in a bushel basket.

Lucky for us, they find a way to do themselves in and thus contribute to the evolution, rather than the devolution of the species.

- 1) This year’s winner was a man whose 38 caliber revolver failed to fire at his intended victim during a hold-up in Long Beach, California. James Elliott was his name and he did something that may sound incredible but it certainly improved the human gene pool. He peered down the barrel and tried the trigger again. This time it worked.
- 2) As a female shopper exited a New York convenience store, a man grabbed her purse and ran. The clerk called 911 immediately, and the woman was able to give them a detailed description of the snatcher. Within minutes, the police apprehended the snatcher. They put him in the car and drove back to the store. The thief was then taken out of the car and told to stand there for a positive ID—to which he replied, “Yes, officer, that’s her. That’s the lady I stole the purse from.”
- 3) Finally, when a man recently tried to siphon gasoline from a motor home parked on a Seattle street, he got much more than he bargained for. Police arrive at the scene to find a very sick man curled up next to a motor home near spilled sewage. A police spokesman said that the man admitted to trying to steal gasoline, but he plugged his siphon hose into the motor home’s sewage tank by mistake. The owner declined to press charges, because he was too busy laughing.

Bumper stickers—you've got to love them. My favorite is of course the one I saw in California: NUKE THE GAY WHALES FOR JESUS. But the other day I saw another good one. Honk if you love Jesus . . . text while driving if you'd like to meet him.

How about a blonde joke?—this could get me in trouble. A blonde goes to the post office to buy stamps for her Christmas cards. She says to the clerk, "May I have 50 Christmas stamps?" The clerk says, "What denomination?"

The blonde says, "What denomination? Oh God, has it come to this? Give me 22 Catholic, 12 Presbyterian, 10 Lutheran, and 6 Baptist."

OK, moving on. Let me tell the story of a boy who was honest in school and paid a price for it.

He said that his teacher asked the class what our favorite animal was, and I said, "Fried chicken." She said, that's not funny—but that couldn't be right because everyone else in the class laughed. Besides, my parents told me to always be truthful and honest, and I am. Fried chicken is my favorite animal. So I told my dad what happened and he said my teacher was probably a member of PETA, and said that such people love animals very much. But I do too, especially chicken, pork, and beef.

Anyway, I got sent to the principal's office and told him what happened and he laughed too. Then he told me not to do it again.

The next day in class my teacher asked me what my favorite live animal was. I told her it was chicken. She asked me why, just like she'd asked the other children, and I told her it was because you could make them into fried chicken. She sent me back to the principal's office, and he laughed and told me not to do it again.

I don't understand. My parents taught me to be honest, but my teacher doesn't like it when I am. Today my teacher asked the class to name the famous person we admire most.

I told her, "Colonel Sanders."

OK, how about this prayer I received from one of my friends who is a Democrat. Dear Lord, in the past year you have taken away my favorite actor (Patrick Swayze), my favorite actress, (Farah Fawcett), my favorite musician (Michael Jackson) and my favorite salesperson (Billy Mays). Just wanted to let you know, Lord, that my favorite TV and radio personalities are Bill O'Reilly, Glen Beck, Rush Limbaugh, Ann Coulter, and Sarah Palin.

Now, speaking of everyone has to go sometime, I have some really sad news to share with you—tragic really. It is my somber duty to report to you this morning that we have lost a great icon of the entertainment industry. The Pillsbury Doughboy.

He died late last night of a yeast infection and trauma complications from repeated pokes in the belly. He was 71.

Doughboy was buried in a lightly greased coffin. Dozens of celebrities turned out to pay their respects, including Mrs. Butterworth, Hungry Jack, the Raisins, Betty Crocker, the Hostess Twinkies, and Captain Crunchy. The grave site was piled high with sifted flours, and Aunt Jemima delivered the eulogy. She lovingly described Doughboy as a man who never knew how much he was kneaded. Doughboy rose quickly in show business, but his later life was filled with turnovers. He was not considered a very smart cookie, wasting much of his dough on half-baked schemes. Despite being a little flaky at times, he still was a crusty old man and was considered a positive role model for millions.

Doughboy is survived by his wife Play Dough and three children: John Dough, Jane Dough and Dosey Dough, plus they had one in the oven. He is also survived by his elderly father, Pop Tart.

The funeral was held at 3:50 for about 20 minutes!

A little three year old boy is sitting on the toilet. His mother thinks he has been in there too long, so she goes in to see what's up. The little boy is sitting there, gripping on to the toilet seat with his left hand and hitting himself on top of the head with his right hand. His mother says, "Billy, are you alright? You've been in here for a while."

Bill says, "I'm fine Mommy. I just haven't gone doody yet."

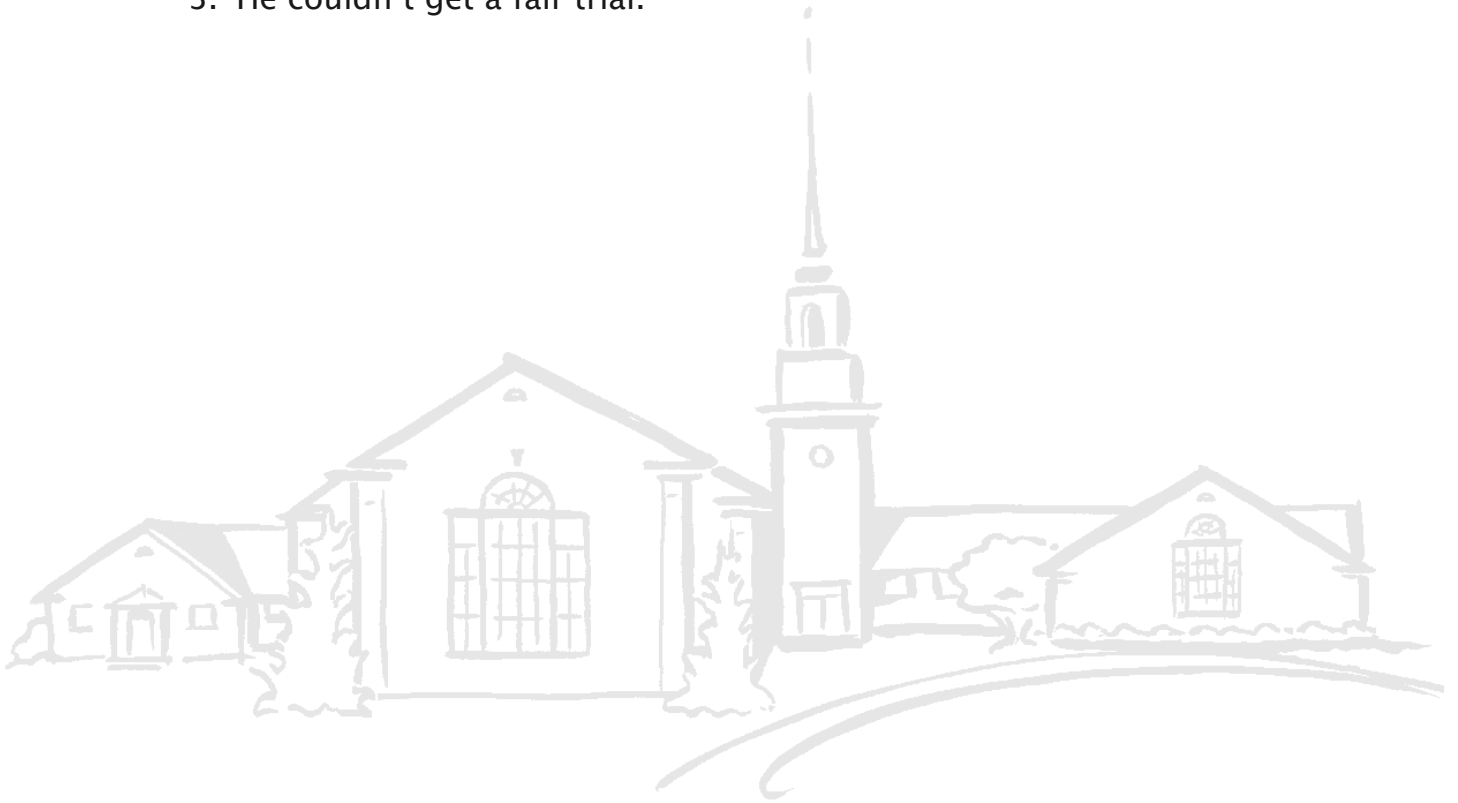
Mother says, "OK, you can stay here a few more minutes, but Billy, why are you hitting yourself on the head?"

Billy says, "Works for ketchup!"

Last but not least . . . as you all know I have spent a good deal of time and energy looking for the historical Jesus. But as I have shared with you before, there is nothing I have ever read that is as convincing in its logic as the argument that I heard in a comedy club that Jesus was in fact a black, Jewish, Italian, Irish woman from California. You laugh, but there are three impeccable reasons given for each.

First, there are three arguments that Jesus was black . . .

1. He called everyone “brother”
2. He liked Gospel
3. He couldn’t get a fair trial.



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Pastoral Prayer for June 6, 2008

Lord of Life, we pray for all those whose lives have been turned upside down by the disaster that has unfolded in the Gulf of Mexico. For the men who lost their lives on the rig that day; for the fishermen whose livelihoods are lost; for those who love the marshes and wetlands of the Gulf coast and must now see dead birds washing ashore, suffocated by oil. For the harm we have done once again to this garden upon which our lives depend, and especially for the children yet to be born, whose future is in our hands, and who do not deserve this.

Remind us that we are all in complicity with this tragedy because we all consume the oil that is increasingly risky to find, and the best thing we can do is to wean ourselves from our dependence on fossil fuels that have no long-term future. And let this be a sign for us that greed kills, that breaking the rules ends up costing us all, and that lying undoes the world and everything in it.

Because we did not make the planet, any more than we made ourselves, we pray for the day when the word “environmentalist” will not be an epithet, but the ultimate compliment. Left or Right, Liberal or Conservative, white, brown or black – let us all remember that the earth belongs to the Lord and the fullness there of. And if we destroy her, it is like killing our Mother.

We pray for the know-how to stop the gusher, and the resolve to turn from our addictions to find long term solutions before it is too late. Let this be sign to us, to those of all faiths and to those of no faith, that business as usual means death. And we choose life.

Amen.



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