

## Holy Humor 2011

I am glad for the silence.

A member told me about worshipping on Easter at Hosanna Lutheran Church in Lakeville.

When the Senior Pastor stepped into the pulpit to preach the sermon, a voice was heard.

It came from a little boy sitting in the balcony, who let his feelings known loudly enough for many people to hear:

“Not that guy again.”

Personally, I’m glad for a little silence.

On the other hand, a little noise can be good.

I’ve noticed it’s just plain hard for some of you to pay attention to the sermon.

Some of you have even called it your mid-morning nap time.

Well that has to end, and that has to end now.

The worship team has come up with a plan to help you.

If any of you are parked in this north parking lot right out here,

and if you have a key fob for your car, the little electronic device where you can lock your doors or turn the alarm on by remote,

please find your key fob now because we are going to use it for today’s service.

To help you stay alert and awake for the sermon, I want you to honk your horn or turn on your alarm every time I say the words “Jesus is Lord.”

Think you have it?

Let’s practice. Hit me with your best shot. Jesus is Lord.

Pretty good.

You stay ready now and listen for your cue words.

I don’t need to make up stuff for Holy Humor Sunday.

Life is just plain funny on its own.

On Tuesday, I was talking with a man about the name of our local sports team.

The Virginia Blue Devils.

What is that title supposed to convey?

That we’re evil? That we’re cold? What?

The name of your sports team is supposed to suggest strength and vigor.

It is supposed to instill fear and trepidation in the hearts of your opponents.

Who is afraid of a golden gopher?

We have the Duluth Bulldogs.

That's not too bad, because bulldogs are famous for tenacity.

But if you've ever met a real bulldog, you know that they have a smashed-in face, they're full of wrinkles, they can hardly run, and they're very drooly.

Who wants to be known for that?

Then again, it could be a lot worse.

We could have one of these official high school names.

If we lived in Vincennes, IN, we would be the Lincoln Alices.

From Cobden, Illinois, we would be the Cobden Appleknockers.

In Blooming Prairie, MN, we would be the Blooming Prairie Awesome Blossoms.

We could be the Battling Bathers of Mt. Clemens, Michigan.

The Belfry Montana Belfry Bats.

From Albany New York, the Doane Stuart Thunder Chickens.

From Hoopeston, Illinois, the Hoopeston Area Cornjerkers.

From Poca, West Virginia, the Poca Dots.

If we moved up to the college level, we could be:

The Scottsdale Community College Fighting Artichokes.

We could be the Fire Ants from the University of South Carolina-Sumter.

The Richland College Thunderducks.

We could be known as The Black Flies of the College of the Atlantic.

We could be the University of California-Santa Cruz Banana Slugs.

Or the State University of New York-College of Environmental Science and Forestry Stumpies.

Who comes up with these titles?

We have our titles. You've heard them in our services over these last weeks:

Children of God, baptized in Christ, Saint and Sinner, Salt and Light, Mission Outposts, Servants of God, Followers of Christ.

These are our titles because Jesus is Lord.

This week's cover of Newsweek is titled "The Good Wife 2012."

Since I know some of you want to be good wives, I thought I would share this cover with you.

So here are the qualities of The Good Wife as announced by Newsweek: []

One moment, please. []

What a joke. What a bunch of hooley.

If you want to be a good wife, I recommend you read the Bible.

Listen to God defining A Good Wife in Proverbs, chapter 31: []

Ladies, there is your beauty.

“A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”

Women and men, boys and girls, people of all ages, here’s what defines your beauty:

Jesus is Lord.

Let’s keep it simple.

Father Daniel Lenihan of Chicago, celebrating his 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday, was asked to name the secret of his longevity.

He thought for a while and answered: “Just keep breathing.”

You want simple?

Nehemiah 8:10: “The joy of the Lord is my strength.”

Jesus’s words in John 15:11: “I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete.”

Paul’s words in Romans 15:13: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing.”

The closing words of Psalm 30: “You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy...O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.”

You want the simple answer why we should laugh and have fun today?

Jesus is Lord.

**Bill: Ladies and gentlemen, that winds up the first half.**

**From the sound of things, we could be here for a while.**

**Let’s take an intermission break.**

**Everybody on your feet. Everybody up. That’s right; this means you.**

**Swing an elbow; wake up that person next to you.**

**It’s time to stretch. Get that blood flowing. Stretch those muscles.**

**Some of you are looking a little piqued. Oh, I forgot; you’re Lutheran.**

**But maybe you’re having a sugar low. It must be refreshment time.**

**We need something to eat. Ushers, distribute the concessions. (turn up; pause)**

**The second half will begin in just a moment. Please find your seats.**

Our Gospel reading is the second half of the story of the Prodigal Son. You are more familiar with the first half of that story. The younger son takes his share of the family fortune and blows it on wine, women, and song. He comes home, tale between his legs, and the father welcomes him with a big party. The message we hear in this parable is that God is gracious and forgiving. God welcomes us home even when we do wrong.

I chose the second half of that story for Holy Humor Sunday. Too often, we are the older son in the story. When Luke tells us the story, he paints this wonderful picture. Inside there is a party going on, with music and dancing and feasting. Outside, the older son is sulking. Picture yourself as the older son. It's been a hard day in the field. You worked hard. You did your duty. You return home only to find a party going on to which you had not been invited. You find out that the party is in honor of that good-for-nothing younger brother who had just returned home. You have been slaving away, day in and day out, doing your job. Did you get a party? NO! Did the bum get a party? Yes. Where's the justice in that?

But this story is not about justice. It is about mercy, forgiveness, and grace. It is a story about the grace of God that receives even the most unworthy into the kingdom of God. And now, the Father comes outside the party looking for you, the sulking, pouting older son. The Father announces his love, his life, for you. You have been included all along; you just didn't see it. Because the mercy of God is for everyone.

Even to us older sons.  
Even to us self-righteous, easily-offended, ungracious folk.

The love of Jesus, love of Jesus, is down in your heart.  
But sometimes, it is so far down that it never actually shows up on your faces or  
in your words or deeds or thoughts.

Listen carefully, people, this is important.  
You have received the kingdom.  
Your heavenly Father has come out to you, to your sulking, you-never-get-your-  
way, self-righteous world.  
God has already invited you to the heavenly feast.  
The music is on, the dancing has begun, the banquet is good to go.  
You can make merry because God's love has been given to you.  
You can laugh and sing because your salvation has already been assured.  
You can enjoy every moment of every day, in this world and the next, because:  
Jesus is Lord.