



Worship Service Theme: Humor and Laughter

Helpful Elements:

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

Wear a silly shirt or hat 😊

Funny nature photos, such as a proboscis monkey

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Today, we are looking at the theme of **laughter**. You may have heard the phrase, "laughter is the best medicine," and that's a biblical truth: in the book of Proverbs, God says, "a joyful heart is good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22). So we'll enjoy some holy laughter today! Thank you for being here.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to bless our time together and refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence today joyfully and reverently, and let us depart with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace that passes all understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

Statement of Faith, p. 2: Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting "The Lord is My Shepherd" together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou
anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I shall
dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

We Gather Together, p. 3

For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 4

Joyful, Joyful, p. 5

First reading: This is from the book of Psalms (126):

¹When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.

²Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then they said among the nations,
“The Lord has done great things for them.”

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

Oh, How I love Jesus, p. 7

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 8

Second reading: This is from the sixth chapter of the gospel of Luke, part of Jesus’
famous Sermon on the Mount:

²⁰Then Jesus turned to his followers and said,
“God blesses you who are poor,
for the Kingdom of God is yours.

²¹God blesses you who are hungry now,
for you will be satisfied.

God blesses you who weep now,
for in due time you will laugh.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

His Eye is on the Sparrow, p. 9

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 10

Interactive Homily: Let's pause our singing for a moment and talk a little more about laughter.

- What sorts of things make you laugh?
 - Jokes, stories
 - Movies (Charlie Chaplin!), pictures (proboscis monkey)
 - Comic strips (what are your favorites?)
 - Funny people
- What happens in the body when you laugh? How does your body feel after you've had a good belly laugh? According to research, laughter:
 - Increases oxygen intake and stimulates heart, lungs, muscles
 - Releases "feel good" chemicals
 - Builds your immunity and reduces pain
 - Reduces stress and tension, increases relaxation
- Maybe even better: how does laughing help your mind and heart?
 - Better mood! Relaxed, happy
 - A good laugh can help put things into perspective
 - Laughing is contagious! Joy spreads!
- Of course, we all know that some laughter isn't as nice. When does humor work against people, against having fun? When is humor inappropriate?
 - When it hurts someone else; ethnic jokes, humor at someone else's expense; careless, demeaning
 - When it's used as a kind of excuse for bad behavior.
 - Proverbs 26: 18-19: Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death ¹⁹is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I am only joking!"
 - "Dirty" humor, just for shock value
 - Sarcasm: meant to bite, not to please; more hostile than funny.
 - The word "sarcasm" derives from the Greek word "sarkazein" which literally means "to tear or strip the flesh off."

- In the Bible, joy is everywhere – the people of God laugh and rejoice because of who God is and what God does. Of course, that doesn't mean everything is happy all the time; God knows that we have times of sorrow and grief. But, as the Bible says, “weeping may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning” (Psalm 30:5). We look to God to restore our joy.

Let's take a moment to silently pray in thanksgiving for the gift of laughter, and thanks for how God meets us in hard times with the promise of future joy.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

He's Got the Whole World, p. 12

In the Garden, p. 13

Standing on the Promises, p. 14

Third Reading: Quotes on Humor and Laughter

Humor springs from God and, being supreme in all things good, God is the most humorous person in existence. ... Anyone who would come up with the ideas to create dogs, llamas, parrots, and proboscis monkeys has a riotous sense of humor. –writer Jon Bloom

Laughter is one way to see happiness and hear it; [laughter is] happiness made visible and audible. It's the sound of joy. Laughter — this happy treasure — [is for us] to cherish as a gift from God. –Pastor Isaac Adams

“Laughter feels like our flotation device -- it won't pull us out of the storm, but it might carry us through, if we can just hang on.” – writer Emery Lord

“Laughter is spiritual. One of the greatest gifts among Indian people has been our ability to laugh. Humor is natural to Indian people. Sometimes the only thing left to do is laugh. Great Spirit, allow me to laugh when times get tough.” –Larry P. Aitken, Ojibwe, professor and luminary of American Indian education

Thou art the blessed God,
Happy in thyself,
Source of happiness in thy creatures. –from *The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers & Devotions*

Hymns:

It is Well with My Soul, p. 15

Amazing Grace, p. 16

Fourth Reading: A Few Jokes to Make us Laugh!¹²³

At Sunday School one day, little Johnny’s teacher was telling the story of how God created everything, including human beings. Johnny seemed especially interested when he heard how Eve was created out of one of Adam’s ribs.

Later in the week, Johnny’s mother noticed him lying down with a frown on his face, and she said, “Johnny, what’s the matter?”

Little Johnny responded, “I have pain in my side. I think I’m going to have a wife.”

Attending a wedding for the first time, a little girl whispered to her mother, “Why is the bride dressed in white?”

The mother replied, “Because white is the color of happiness, and today is the happiest day of her life.”

The child thought about this for a moment then said, “So why is the groom wearing black?”

¹ <https://mvidigital signage.com/blog/jokes-break-ice-church-outreach-event/>

² <https://www.pastoralcareinc.com/resources/sermon-helps/jokes-for-sermons/>

³ <https://www.rd.com/jokes/religion/>

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her 5-year-olds and 6-year-olds. After explaining the commandment to “Honor thy father and thy mother,” the Sunday School teacher asked, “Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?”

Without missing a beat, one little boy answered, “Thou shall not kill.”

A man was coming out of church one day. The preacher was standing at the door as usual is to shake hands. The preacher grabbed this man by the hand, pulled him aside, and said to him, “You need to join the Army of the Lord!” The man replied, “I’m already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor.” The pastor asked, “Then why don’t I see you at church except at Christmas and Easter?” My friend whispered back, “I’m in the secret service.”

A kindergarten teacher gave her class a “show and tell” assignment of bringing something to represent their religion.

The first child got in front of the class and said, “My name is Benjamin and I’m Jewish and this is the Star of David.”

The second child got in front of the class and said, “My name is Mary, I’m Catholic and this is a Crucifix.”

The third child got up in front of his class and said, “My name is Tommy and I’m Baptist and this is a casserole.”

What kind of car would Jesus drive? A Christler.

What did Eve say when handing Adam something to wear? “Take it or leaf it.”

My local church recently held a masquerade themed dinner and while the priest was saying grace I suddenly realized... It was a blessing in disguise.

Our fourth grader celebrated his birthday on crutches, so he couldn’t carry the cupcakes into school without help. I asked our sixth-grader, Noah, to help his brother carry them in. “I could,” he said, “but I’d prefer not to.” Spotting a teaching moment, my husband asked Noah, “What would Jesus do?” Noah answered, “Jesus would heal him so he could carry his own cupcakes.”

On the way to church to make his first confession, my nervous seven-year-old grandson asked me what he could expect.

“Confession is where you tell all the bad things you’ve done to the priest,” I told him. He looked relieved. “Good. I haven’t done anything bad to the priest.”

When our minister and his wife visited our neighbor, her four-year-old daughter answered the door. “Mom!” she yelled toward the living room. “God’s here, and he brought his girlfriend!”

I was telling my three boys the story of the Nativity and how the Wise Men brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh for the infant Jesus. Clearly giving it a lot of thought, my six-year-old observed, “Mom, a Wise Woman would have brought diapers.”

Hymns:

When the Saints Go Marching In, p. 17

How Great Thou Art, p. 18

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his to face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, Reprise, p. 30