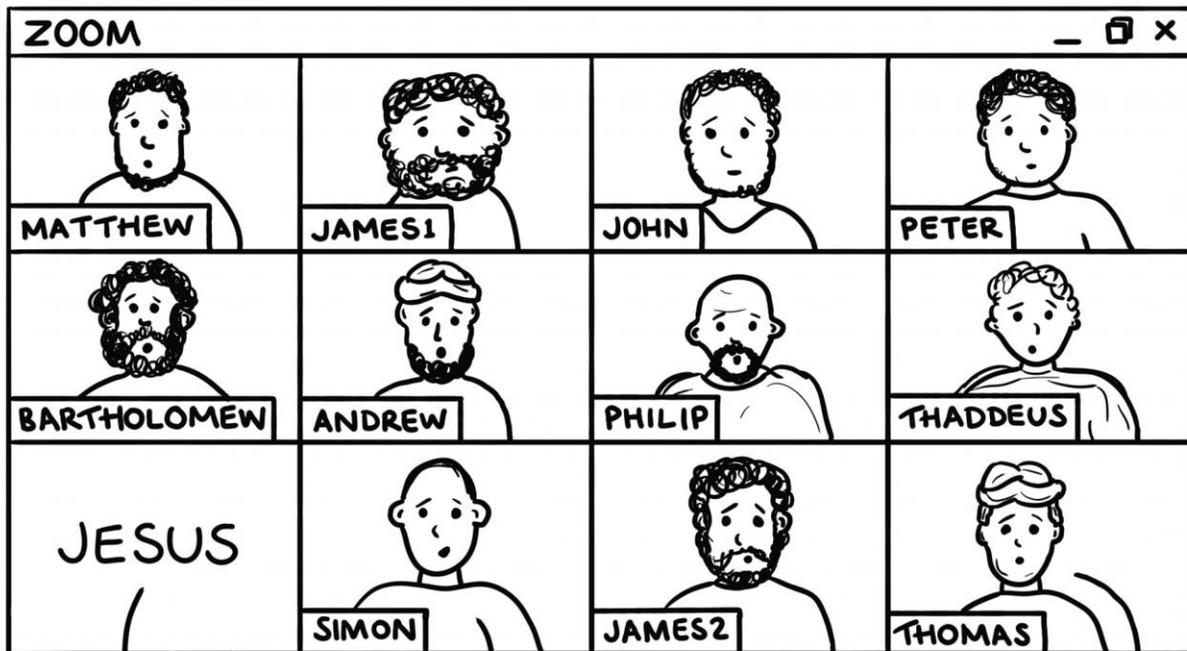


Holy Humour Sunday

This is only one of countless cartoons circulating on the internet – often leaving me in stitches, grateful for a light moment in an otherwise very heavy time.



HEY.

HOW ON EARTH IS HE IN THE MEETING?

UNLESS HE TURNS ON HIS CAMERA, I WILL NOT BELIEVE IT

Tim Wakeling

Used with permission

Interestingly, while I found this quite humorous, others objected to it, feeling somehow it was not appropriate. This is at times a tension in the church – what is and what isn't okay to say or think, and indeed, it varies from person to person.

At the same time, it is important to note the value of humour in any culture, and the value of laughter, even in difficult times – as someone once said to me, “laughter is like jogging for the soul”, and couldn't we all do with a bit of that!

Indeed, contrary to some held beliefs that we should not “laugh in church”, there is actually an ancient Christian practice of doing just that, and quite timely, doing just that on the second Sunday after Easter.

Known as Holy Humour Sunday, or “Bright” Sunday, this was a Sunday to celebrate, to laugh out loud, to play tricks and pranks, for indeed, hadn’t God just played the biggest trick on Satan by raising Jesus from the dead?!

So, tell a joke, play a prank, laugh out loud, share funny Facebook posts – you will be in good company....

“Seeing and Believing”

Gospel: John 20:19-31

The risen Jesus appears to his disciples, offering them a benediction, a commission, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. But one of their number is missing, and his unbelief prompts another visit from the Lord.

¹⁹When 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 [*Jewish authorities*].’

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the people were living were locked for fear of the Covid-19 virus....

Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

Jesus comes and stands among us in our fear, and tells us “Peace be with you”...Peace..., he probably said Shalom, from the Aramaic, a root of Hebrew. “Shalom” means peace more than simply the absence of conflict but rather, fullness of life....Peace be with you even in the midst of your fear, your uncertainty, your bewilderment...life may not be perfect, but you can still have Shalom...

As has been said:

Fear does not stop death. It stops life. And worrying does not take away tomorrow's troubles. It takes away today's peace.

²⁰After [Jesus] said this, he showed them his hands and his side.

Jesus shows us his woundedness, his humanity...

Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you."

We realize that in the midst of life in all its complexity, its hardship, its uncertainty, its tragedy, God is still among us, offering us peace, offering us life in the midst of death, moving us towards the next place we need to be..

²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Jesus reminds us that again, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit, and we are empowered not only for ourselves, but to continue to be in relationship with one another...we are given the gift of relationship and the power of relationship...it is incumbent upon us to keep relationships open, healthy and strong – carrying grudges has no place in the kingdom of God...even in a time when we must be physically apart, we can be in relationship - that voice at the other end of the phone – the familiar beloved face on the screen, the email or facebook posts that remind us that we are loved and we can love....

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So 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."

For some it is harder to believe, to accept, to understand...we were warned of a pandemic years ago...scientists and researchers who track trends knew that something was coming, and that we should prepare...some listened – like the Alberta government in storing up medical supplies, but most gave it barely any mind, preferring instead to remain skeptical and nay-saying, until it has hit us, full force. Why is it so hard to hear the testimony of others, especially if we don't agree with it or don't want to hear about it?

[It's the same with technology – some churches saw the future, and started live-streaming and recording services; for them, the lockdown has just been a matter of flipping a few switches; for the rest of us, the learning curve is very steep...]

I saw a very telling, thought-provoking slide on Facebook:

*“You say that because you cannot see God,
you cannot believe...
odd...you cannot see the Corona virus either,
yet you are wearing a mask and gloves....”*

*“...you cannot see the Corona virus either,
yet you are wearing a mask and gloves....”*

You take these precautions for fear of the infection/damage Covid-19 can do to you and those in your circle, and so you should – this virus is nasty. we cannot see the virus, yet we know it is there....we cannot predict its presence, its absence, its path...

But think about it...what if, in your skepticism and unbelief, you open yourself to the possibility of the God you also cannot see, then perhaps the “antibodies of Goodness” will overcome the illness in your world...and bring you to a deeper, stronger wholeness – it just might be worth trying.

²⁶A week later [*the*] 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." ²⁷Then 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." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

Another play on words:

*Make sure you
test Positive for Faith.
Keep a safe distance from Doubt.
And isolate unbelief!*

God comes to us in our difficulty, in our unbelief, in our unfaithfulness. God stands among us, and says "Peace be with you..." God offers us redemption, forgiveness, reassurance, faith, hope and love....in other words, Shalom. The disciples did not reject Thomas; he remained part of the community...neither does God reject us when we struggle and doubt; God simply waits patiently, holding the light at the end of the tunnel until we stumble around the corner and see it shining there...We, then become like Thomas the Believer, the first one to say, "My Lord and my God"!

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

Christ is risen, Alleluia! Christ is risen indeed, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Come, reach out and touch the wounds....come and believe...come....all are welcome. Amen