

The Name You Make and the Name That Makes You

Genesis 3:20

Aug. 1, 2021

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<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/the-name-you-make-and-the-name-that-makes-you/>

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This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!

[Offertory song: "Vapor" by Gungor]

Prayer

Message

In the mid 1980's, while I was in seminary, I worked as Assistant High School Youth Director at Bel Air Presbyterian Church.

It was Ronald Reagan's church, as well as folks like Kenny Rogers, Carol Lawrence, Steve Alan, and Cheryl Ladd.

That was pretty exciting for a kid like me, but rather depressing for Eloise.

Eloise was the secretary for the youth department.

She was single, divorced, and rather old—at least in my mind at the time...

I did the math this week; she was actually 56... younger than I am now.

Well, for Bel Air, she wasn't much to look at, and rather unrefined.

She wouldn't use the intercom; She'd just yell, "Peter, get the phone."

She wasn't a great secretary. She wore jeans, because one leg was skinny from a bout with polio as a young girl.

She wore jeans, until, to her horror, the new assistant pastor made her wear dresses in order to project the proper image.

I really enjoyed Eloise, but most folks treated her like a second-class citizen—nothing overt (after all, it was a church).

So, people would say, "Please," "Thank you" and "God bless."

Yet, with short attention spans, impatience, and demands—with their eyes—they would communicate: "I've judged you and named you."

Psychologists tell us that the subconscious mind is incredibly adept at reading subconscious signals, projected subconsciously by others.

When we see something that we desire, our pupils dilate subconsciously as if to receive the person or thing we desire.

And when we see something that we judge to be undesirable our pupils constrict as if to shut that person or thing out. We can't help it.

There is a word in Hebrew that can be translated "pupil" or "apple" and is used to describe God's people—they are the "apple of his eye."

The word is "ishown," literally "little man."

It refers to one's own image reflected in the eye of another.

When another looks at you, you see yourself as a reflection in the pupil of their eye... whether that pupil dilates or constricts, tells you what they think of you—you become their "pupil;" they teach you.

Eloise read the eyes and learned the lesson: most people esteemed her not.

"He had no form or majesty that we should look at him" prophesied Isaiah, "...and we esteemed him not."ⁱ

"We once regarded Christ from a human point of view" writes Paul, "we regard him thus no longer."ⁱⁱ

One day, Eloise brought an old scrapbook to work.

I had to beg her to let me see it.

I opened it up, and there was the young face of our youth secretary, Eloise, on the cover of Vogue Magazine.

I turned the page and there she was again on the cover of some other magazine and another, and another.

[E – TC 47]

This is Eloise on the cover of True Confessions in 1947.

[E – TC 48]

Here she is again in 1948.

[E – Palmolive]

This is Eloise advertising Palmolive soap.

[E – Sweetheart]

Here she's advertising Sweetheart soap.

[E – Ivory]

This is for Ivory Soap in 1949

"Are cover girls born beautiful?"

One day, Eloise told me that her roommate had been Grace Kelly.

Once she told me that she used to date John F. Kennedy.

I said, "Eloise, you dated John F. Kennedy? What happened?"

She went, "Oh, I dumped him." "Dumped him?" I said, "Why'd you dump him?"

She said, "Oh, he was boring – just politics and all stuffy."

One of my favorite things to do at Bel Air Presbyterian Church, was to walk up to snobby people, who happened to be pushing Eloise around, and say...

"Hey, did you know Eloise was on the cover of Vogue?"

Did you know she roomed with Grace Kelly?

Did you know she dated John F. Kennedy?

And she not only dated him, she dumped him."

All at once, their entire demeanor would change for their judgment had changed; Eloise's name had changed—no longer "Secretary to the youth department," but "Covergirl."

Their eyes would dilate.

I'm convinced that Eloise loved me... but she would hate it when I would say things like that; She'd say, "Peter stop, just stop."

I was 23, and at the time, I just didn't understand.

Well, how we see people changes how we treat people, and how we treat people, changes people—creates people or desecrates people.

Eventually, the judgments of folks at church and the demand that she wear a skirt to keep up appearances, just got to Eloise... and she lost her job.

Before I left Los Angeles, I went to visit Eloise with a friend.

- She lived alone in a dark one bedroom apartment.
- Entirely paranoid: she wouldn't go outside or even answer the phone.
- She kept muttering, "What will people think, what will people think?"

I'm sure I told her, "Eloise... it doesn't matter what people think."

But soon after, at the age of 60, my friend Eloise died alone in that apartment.

And you see, all my fawning over her supermodel past, didn't help...

I imagine that it only made it worse: Cover girls may be born beautiful, but they don't stay beautiful—at least not in the eyes of this world.

They don't stay beautiful, just as young men may be competent and powerful, but don't stay competent and powerful... they gradually turn to dust.

And so, our encouragements are often discouragements, for we congratulate each other on our ability to accumulate dust and a can of ashes.

I've often wondered: what could I have said to Eloise, or to the demanding people that would stand at her desk with judgments in their eyes...

What could I have said, that would have healed her soul and quenched her thirst?

For the past 2 weeks we've been preaching on Jesus & the Woman at the Well.

Eloise reminds me of that woman and her empty water jar... before she turned into a fountain.

You know Jesus was a lady's man; it's rather surprising when you notice.

Can you think of any woman that he reprimands, or speaks poorly of—other than, possibly, his mom at a wedding, when she wants him to make wine?

So sweet to women, but men? He calls some "white-washed tombs;" he scolds his disciples; he even looks at Peter and says "Get behind me satan."

But women? They can be possessed, they can be prostitutes, they can be infected with disease and weeping at his feet, AND he sings their praises and makes them his first evangelists—like Mary Magdalene and the Woman at the Well.

It makes sense, when you consider the fact that he's called the Eschatos Adamⁱⁱⁱ which means last man, or ultimate man—He's the Man that everyone has been waiting for—"the perfect image of the invisible God."

And humanity—that's you and me—we are his Bride.

And, in the Bible, Groom and Bride become one Body.

And that Body bears the fruit of Life... even Eternal Life.

I, honestly, find the Bible to be a rather ridiculous book, unless you take it seriously... Unless you take all of it seriously.

If you pick and choose the parts that make sense to you, it can never make sense of you... seriously. And by “seriously,” I don’t mean “literally”—as modern people mean literally—I mean more than literally; the Bible is more true than space and time.

The Bible begins with a story that modern people have not taken seriously. And thus, they don’t take most of the Bible seriously—And, they don’t take the Word of God, the Eschatos Adam... they don’t take Jesus, seriously.

They read the story, like they read an instruction manual for the microwave. So, they think it’s simply about a naked man, woman, and talking snake, and so, miss the point entirely... or make the point that there is no point, for the story couldn’t have actually happened... according to them.

Modern people utterly miss the point that the story is entirely about them.

It’s about:

A garden that exists not only in Palestine, but in the depths of every human soul.

A garden not only in the past, but at the edge of time and eternity—which is now.

A garden that is also a city, and a body, and a bride.

A garden, where we are all finished in the image and likeness of God.

I’ve written some books on the topic:

[1.] The History of Time and the Genesis of You, which is about the Biblical truth that in space and time we are still being made in the image of God.

[2.] God and His Body: The Romance of Adam and His Bride, which is about the Biblical truth that God creates us through the Romance of the Gospel.

And One Day, I hope to write, [3.] The Tree in the Middle of the Garden, which will be about the Biblical truth that God in Christ Jesus finishes the Job of making us on a tree in the middle of the garden—a tree that we’ve come to call “the cross.”

And why am I telling you all of this?

Well because in Genesis 3:20 Adam says something to Eve...

that, I believe, Jesus, the Eschatos Adam, says to each one of us.

And, I think, we can say it to each other.

And, when we say it to each other, I want us to believe that it’s not just psycho-babble, religious nonsense, or wishful thinking.

I want us to believe it’s the Word of God who creates all things.

And I think I could’ve said it, or something like it, to Eloise... in 1984

Hopefully you remember that God just speaks a Word, or some words, in Genesis Chapter One and all creation happens, and on the seventh day, “it is finished,” and “everything is good...,” which would include you.

But, in Genesis Chapter Two, the Bible begins to describe your creation...

And, although I may not know you at all, I’d venture a guess that you’re not entirely good and so not entirely finished... you’re still being created.

In Genesis Two, God breathes into the dust and begins to make Adam, which is normally translated “man” or “mankind.” or “humanity.”

Because humanity can't find God, our helper, God puts humanity to sleep and from the side of man, makes woman.

"Man" names her "woman" for she's fashioned from the side of man,
just as the Church is fashioned from the side of Christ, with body broken and blood shed.

In Genesis Chapter Three, a serpent tempts the woman to make herself in the image of God, although God has already said that he would make us in his own image.

The Serpent tempts her to do this by taking fruit from this tree in the middle of the garden.
She takes knowledge of the Good, which is also the Life, and everything begins to die...
She ate and gave some to her husband who was with her.
He would not leave her nor forsake her.

(St. Paul writes, "Adam was not deceived, the woman was deceived, and became a transgressor."^{iv}
That makes no sense if Paul was talking about any old adam, for Paul is super clear that every man,
every adam—except one—sins...

So, maybe Paul is not talking about any old Adam; Paul is the one that teaches us all about the
eschatos Adam, who will not leave us nor forsake us.)

Well, the woman eats, and death enters the human race: Christ is sacrificed on a tree in a garden;
the black plague sweeps across Europe; six million Jews are tortured and exterminated... and
everyone that you have ever loved, suffers, and dies.

[Genesis 3:15-20]

In Genesis 3:9, God finds Eve and that first Adam, hiding in fig leaves and shame.

He curses the serpent, saying, "I will put enmity... between her offspring [seed] and your offspring
[seed]... he (the seed) shall [crush] your head and you shall bruise his heel."

Then God curses the ground, saying to Adam, "Because you listened to the voice of you wife and
have eaten of the tree... in pain shall you eat of [the ground] all the days of your life... you are dust
and to dust you will return."

Next verse Genesis 3:20 "The man [ha adam: "The Adam"], called his wife's name (his isha's name)
Eve, because she was the mother of all living."

Are you paying attention? Isn't that the very last thing that we would expect the Adam to say?
She has just listened to satan and committed the original sin resulting in the death of all Life... and
all the suffering, sorrow, and loneliness in humanity.

You would expect Adam to say, "You stupid woman; that's the last time I listen to you! That's the
last time I let you do the talking! And now, you better obey the rules, join an accountability group,
and get your act together."^v

You would expect some more cursing, some legislation, and some religion.

You would expect him to name her "The Mother of Death."

But instead, he names her "Eve," which means "the Mother of all living," or simply "the Mother of
Life..." as in "The Life."

He names her that because "she was" that, according to Genesis 3:20.

The verb "was" is in the perfect tense in Hebrew, indicating that this has already happened, and is
perfected—"It is finished."

It's not that she might be, she could be, would be or should be, but she already *is* the Mother of Life.

How could Adam do that?

He doesn't name her according to what she has done.
He names her according to the Word that God had spoken.

In Chapter One, God had said, "let us make humanity in our image, after our likeness... and it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, (including Eve) and it was very good."
Even in Chapter Three, God had said, "[the seed of the woman]... he will crush [the serpent's head]"
This Adam, in Genesis 3:20, names her "Mother of Life."
This Adam knows "the Good," which is "the Life," and that Eve will give birth to "the Life... not only to living things, but all the living, "the Life."

So anyway, Eve "works" death, and Adam names her the Mother of all living—Mother of life.
How could Adam do that? Well maybe this isn't simply the first Adam.

When Adam fell, God's son fell; because of the true union made in heaven, God's son could not leave Adam, for by Adam I understand all men. Writes Julian of Norwich. Adam fell from life to death into the valley of this wretched world, and after that into Hell. God's son fell with Adam into the valley of the Virgin's womb...

St. Paul writes that "Adam was a type"—a tupos, in Greek—an imprint.^{vi}
It refers to the empty form left by pressing a figure into clay.
It refers to an empty space destined to be filled with a substance.
Adam was a type of the One who was to come... the substance.

Adam was a type, and all people are a type, for we, (male and female) are all Adam—we're all an empty humanity, destined to be filled with Jesus, the Christ. "The substance belongs to Christ" (Colossians 2:17).

Even now, every good decision in you is the life of Jesus manifesting in you;
He is your righteousness.

So, Adam names the woman taken from his side...
He names her, but not according to what she had done.

And what had she done?
Well, she listened to a lie, and so tried to make a name for herself.^{vii}
[Fall and Redemption]

The snake tempted her to take the knowledge of the Good in order to make herself in the image of "the Good"—who is God.
Jesus is the Good in flesh; Jesus is the Life; and Jesus is The Eschatos Adam.
So, Jesus must've somehow been on that tree in the middle of the garden.

So, I hope you see that the fruit of the tree is not bad.
But how we take it, can be the very definition of evil.
And how we receive it can be the very definition of the Good... even Life.

Eve, listened to the lie and took knowledge in order to make a name for herself, and instead of making Life, she made death.
You remember what Jesus said to the Jews, who tried to justify themselves with knowledge of Good and evil?

He said, "You are of your father the devil... the father of lies."

The Devil can't make real people, but with lies he gets us to make false people.
Perhaps they are the offspring of the serpent that God mentions in Genesis 3?

Well, when you name yourself, that is judge yourself, according to what you have done—you make a false self; I think we normally call it an ego.

[Old Adam 1] It is who you are not.

[Old Adam 2] It is constructed with your Judgments, which are disobedience, darkness, lies, and death—which are not a substance, but an absence.

[Old Adam 3] It is filled with Pride, Shame and Fear, which in reality are nothing—nothing but the manifestation of a lie.

[Old Adam 4] It is the void... it is the manifest absence of the Way, the Truth, the Life, and the Light... in you.

[Fall and Redemption] But what happens when we come back to the tree in the middle of the garden?

When we come to know Jesus Christ crucified and risen from the dead?

When we hear him say, "Father forgive, It is finished, Into your hands I
commit my spirit."

When we know Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ has come to know us?

What happens when we see that what we have taken, has always been given?

What happens when we receive the body and blood as a gift, rather than take the body and blood as our due?

What happens when we receive the Eternal Seed?

[New Adam 3] Well, God reveals the New Adam in us, the New Man.

"Faith, hope and love" in you are the Word of God in you;

You can't make Love; Love makes you, with his Word.

[New Adam 2] And Christ in you, is God's Judgment in you, Mercy in you, Light in you, the Way, the Truth and the Life in you.

You don't determine God's Judgment; God's Judgment determines you.

[New Adam 1] The "me" that God creates is who "I Am," and who I am is actually "I am that I am" in "me."

Who I am is eternal, and yet, being revealed in space and time in me as me.

So, check this out:

[I am not, and I am]

WHO I am, takes the very shape of WHO I am not.

So, WHO I am not, is like a womb for the formation and revelation of WHO I am

"In the very place where it was said to them, 'you are not my people,'" writes Paul, "they will be called sons of the living God."^{viii}

"Where sin increased Grace abounded all the more."^{ix}

[My Judgment and God's Judgment]

In the very place of my bad judgment, God reveals his good Judgment.

God's judgment is Grace...

[New Adam 4]

God's Judgment in me, is His Word in Me; it's Christ in me.

So, this is the utterly amazing part: Jesus is God's Judgment of me.

Jesus is the revelation of who I am, perfectly filling and annihilating the emptiness of who I am not.

Jesus is the Son of Man, which Makes "Man" the mother of Jesus.

[Eve]

It turns out that Old Adam is Eve...

And Eve gives birth to the New Adam, which is who we truly are.

We are the Bride and Body of Christ, giving birth to the life of Christ in ourselves and this world.

And it's not religious mumbo jumbo, psycho-babel, or wishful thinking; it's called "reality."

You are not your own creation; You are the good creation of God, being manifest in time and being born out of time into eternity.

NOW, you need to get a beer, sit by a river, and ponder that for thirty years.

But this is what I hope you would believe right now: [slides off]

You cannot make a name for yourself... other than lies.

And yet there is a name, that has already made you, and is revealing you in time, as you are born out of time and into eternity.

The name is "Jesus." It means "God is Salvation."

There is enmity between the false self and the true self.

For the false self (the spawn of satan) believes that it is salvation...

And the true self knows that God is salvation... that self, is who you truly are.

With every word, with every glance...

We can judge people for what they've done and feed the ego (the spawn of satan)

or we can proclaim God's judgment and help people become who they really are.

And so, I could've walked up to Eloise's desk, in front of everyone in the room, and said: Hey did you know:

Eloise has cleansed herself with Palmolive, Sweetheart, and Ivory soap, but even better she's been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb?

She not only dated John F. Kennedy; she's betrothed to Jesus the Christ?

She not only roomed with Grace Kelly, but the Spirit of God, who is Grace, makes his home in her heart?

Her face was on the cover Vogue, but even better, her face is reflected in the eyes of God—SHE IS the apple of his eye?

Eloise was born a cover girl, but she's gettin' filled with the Glory of God?

If we saw her as she truly is, we would drop to the floor in Holy Terror before the eternal brilliance, that we now call "Eloise."

I could've said that—a True Confession—but, if I had said that, she probably would've still said, "Stop it Peter, you're embarrassing me."

To her, it would've sounded like, psycho-babel, wishful thinking, or religious mumbo jumbo.

But, if I had believed that about me... I might have believed that about her... such that, whenever I saw Eloise, she'd see her reflection in the dilated pupils of my eyes and have just a little more faith in the reality of God.

The way we see people changes the way we treat people, and the way we treat people, can tell them who they really are.

When people believe who it is that they really are, they become who it is that they really are—the image and likeness of God, who is Love.

“As [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he.”^x

This is what every Good parent does with their children:

You don't make your child make a name for themselves.

You give them a name that will make them who they are.^{xi}

You say, “Jonathan, you don't treat your sister like that; that's not who you are.”

“Becky, you're not mean; you're my sweetheart—that's who you are.”

Now you may say, “Peter we don't know who people are.”

And that's true—you can't name them.

And yet you can name them.

They have a name, like a first name that God will reveal at the end of time.

And they have a surname, that God has revealed from the dawn of time.

They are the image and likeness of Love; they are the body of the Eschatos Adam; they are the body of Jesus the Christ.

So, if a name won't stick on Jesus, it won't stick on them.

They may have done the work of the flesh—fornication, idolatry, envy, drunkenness, competition, and the like.

That's what they've done; but not who they are.

They are the Fruit of the Spirit—Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Good and Faith... they are the creation of God.

And the Miracle is that, as we confess what we've done, and receive the Word of Grace in that place, the very works of the flesh, that we have done, are transformed into the fruit of the Spirit, which is what God does... and who it is that we actually are.

I have a friend, whom satan tried to name “the Mother of Death.”^{xii}

[Woman]

But in prayer, Jesus revealed to her, that she is “the Mother of the Living.”

[Eve]

Several years ago, she called me on her way to a meeting about going on a mission trip to an orphanage in Africa.

She said, “Peter, pray for me, for who am I to go on a thing like this, after all I've seen and the things I've done.”

I said, “My dear... would you consider holding a dying AIDS baby, to be a gift?”

She answered, “Oh, yes. I would consider, holding that baby, to be the greatest gift in all the world!”

I said, “Well, few people, in all the world, can say that, and that's why you should go. It's a gift to you, so you are a gift to Jesus, in the temple that is that Baby.”

She didn't have to love, she wanted to Love—it was the fruit of the Spirit and the birth of herself, her true self.

She now runs a mission organization, and is a mother to hundreds of children in Africa... She is the Mother of Life... and so are you. Jesus is the Life.

The Word of Grace in the place of our emptiness and sin, gives birth to a new desire: Love. God is Love, and Love in flesh, is the eschatos Adam, who it is that you truly are... Jesus is and always has been, God's opinion of you.^{xiii} And his opinion is reality.

What you can do, by taking knowledge and trying harder, is actually nothing. But what God does do, when you receive his Word, and speak his Word, is the New Creation—all things filled with God and united in Christ Jesus.

[Jesus]

My old friend Eloise made a name for herself...

And so, she struggled to believe the name that made her himself—his Beloved, his Bride, and his Body.

But if she hasn't yet believed, she will believe, for he will not leave her nor forsake her—even if she makes her bed in sheol, even there, he will hold her.^{xiv}

Even in the depths of Sheol he will hold you... until the end of time, if need be. But how much better, if you surrendered to the eternal Word, right now.

On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and broke it saying, this is my body given to you. And he took the cup saying this is the covenant in my blood drink of it all of you... the Life is in the blood.

When you come to this table you confess what you have done.
You have taken the life of God on a tree in a garden.
And when you come to this table you receive what God has done.
On a tree in a garden, He has given you, his Life, his Word.

He has given you, his name.
You must no longer attempt to make a name for yourself.
You must receive the name that makes you... and all things with you.^{xv}

Pray with me:
I confess that I have been trying to create myself.
And now I would like to believe that I am your creation.

BENEDICTION:

If you're like me, I know something about you:
You have been trying to create yourself....
And you suck at it.
That sounds like bad news, but it's the very best news.

For once you stop believing that you create yourself,
you can believe that you are the creation of God.
And everything that God creates is "very good."
And "It is Finished."

Psalm 2

- 1 Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?**
- 2 The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed (*mashiyach*: Messiah), saying,**
- 3 "Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."**
- 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.**
- 5 Then he will speak to them in his wrath,
and terrify them in his fury, saying,**
- 6 "As for me, I have set my King
on Zion, my holy hill."**
- 7 I will tell of the decree:
The LORD said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you.**
- 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,
and the ends of the earth your possession.**
- 9 You shall break them with a rod of iron
and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."**

- 10 Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.**
**11 Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.**
**12 Kiss the Son (NRSV, RSV: "feet"),
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.**
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

There are so many things that are a bit weird about that, and one thing that I find really disturbing.

It's weird that "the Son's wrath is quickly kindled," cause several times Scripture say that God is "slow to anger," same word... "slow to anger and abounding in *hesed*—that is relentless love." The Son's wrath is weird—he's angry at those who don't find happiness in him... for blessed, happy are all who take refuge in him. It's weird how David says, "serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling," that's not your garden variety fear.

It's weird that although the nations rage against him, the Son is told to ask for those very nations as his inheritance... and then told he will break those very nations, the peoples, like a potter's vessel.

(Jerusalem and her kings turn out to be a potter's vessel broken in Gehenna in Jeremiah 19. And in the Revelation, we find that we are Jerusalem.)

Maybe it's most weird that Israel keep singing this song.

Most scholars argue that this is an enthronement psalm, which means that it was the traditional song of choice when a new king would be enthroned in Jerusalem, on Mt. Zion.

In 2nd Samuel 7, David wants to build God a house, and God says, I will "make you a house," for I'll exalt your son after you and he will build a house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son." That's son of David and Son of God.

God had told Abraham that he was blessed to be a blessing to all the nations of the world, through his seed, through a promised son. The prophets even prophesied that all nations would flow into Jerusalem. The Jews expected it to happen through this son, this king, the Messiah.

It looked like things were all going to plan for a little while. Solomon, David's son, built the house, the temple, and he expanded the kingdom... a bit. But in just a generation the kingdom split. For 400 years Judah would crown kings, sing this song, and hope that the next king would be the prophesied messiah—that means "anointed one."

In 589 BC, Jerusalem fell and in 70 AD it was utterly leveled by Romans.

That means that for a thousand years, this psalm was like a bad joke...until sometime around 33 AD when some folks began singing it in a new way. Of course, I'm talking about a handful of Christians.

This is one of the most referenced Psalms in the New Testament.^{xvi} It's quoted twice in the book of Acts and twice in the book of Hebrews as if it had already happened. And it's referenced three times

in the Revelation as something that has happened, is happening and will happen. And yet it's no wonder that the Jews rejected the Messiah when he rode into Jerusalem, where he was enthroned on a tree.

It's just so weird how their expectations turned out to be so incongruent with reality. They expected so much more, or maybe, so much less than Jesus. For some Jesus was a tragedy, and yet for all he will prove to be just the opposite.

- 1 **Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?**
- 2 **The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD and against his Anointed (*mashiyach*: Messiah), saying,**
- 3 **"Let us burst their bonds apart
and cast away their cords from us."**

David^{xvii} asks:

- Why do the nations rage and the people plot?
- Why did Hitler kill six million Jews?
- Why does Israel keep Palestinians behind a wall?
- Why do y'all get so worked up about the next election?
- Why do the Principalities and Powers, and the people of this world plot and rage?

Answer: they hate the Lord and his Messiah. They want to burst their bonds and cast away their restraints. Well what restraint has God put on Adolph Hitler, Benjamin Netanyahu, Donald Trump, and me and you?

Well, how about a law written on our hearts, or a word whispered in the depths of the soul?

"Love me, Love your neighbor... as I have loved you."

"Don't strive to be first; but choose to be last in the service of Love."

"Don't exalt yourself; humble yourself."

Is that not the most challenging restraint placed upon the arrogant human ego hungry for conquest and power?

- 4 **He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.**

Does God laugh at Adolph Hitler? Does Jesus laugh at Pontius Pilate, King Herod, Caiaphas, and Caesar? Laugh...even though he allowed Jerusalem to fall, and his life to be taken on the tree? Last week we talked about Jesus weeping in the pit of sorrow. Did he weep in the pit as he laughed from the throne?^{xviii}

That's weird, but this is really troubling. This question: Does God laugh at me? Am I one of those people that plots and plans in vain?

The Hebrew Word, *sachaq*, is translated as “laugh” in verse 4. It appears in various forms, and is usually translated “laugh,” “play,” or even “mock.” *La’ag* which appears at the end of the verse is almost always “mock,” or “scorn.”

Does God mock me? Does he laugh at me? Does he hold me in derision?

Psalm 2 is quoted in Revelation 19, where Jesus rides a white horse with a robe dipped in blood and rules the nations with a rod of iron as he tramples the winepress of the wrath of God. And then the birds of the air eat the flesh of kings, captains and all people.

All people!

See? We each want to be king; that’s the nature of our flesh. Each time we exalt ourselves and exert our will over God’s will, we’re trying to burst the bonds of Love and become our own ruler and authority.

Paul tells us that Jesus will destroy every rule, authority and power.^{xix} Of course, he laughs at every power which exalts itself against God. He is God’s word of power that upholds all things. And it would appear that he’s fixin’ to “laugh all of us to scorn.”

Laughter is a pretty mysterious thing. Amongst all God’s creatures, only people really laugh... laugh or weep. And philosophers struggle to know why.

According to Wikipedia and the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, there are three classic theories of humor:^{xx} The Superiority Theory, Relief Theory and Incongruity Theory.

Plato seemed to be offended by laughter and warned against it as malicious. Renee Descartes warned against derision and scorn as a “sort of joy mingled with hatred.”

Many religious orders have argued that this is why we should avoid laughter. “For it’s all a form of derision. In fact, laughter belongs to God, for he is superior,” they say. “He is not mocked, and only he should do the mocking.”

That’s the Superiority Theory. We laugh because we enjoy noticing that we’re superior.

Is that why God laughs?

Video clip: *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery*
New Line Cinema (1997)

Dr. Evil (Mike Meyers) and his henchmen are gathered together in his evil conference room.

Dr. Evil Gentlemen, in exactly five days we will be \$100,000,000 richer.

Maniacal laughter crescendos, continues, dies out awkwardly after 30 seconds.

That’s how Dr. Evil laughs. I think that’s how Satan laughs or pretends to laugh. In the words of JRR Tolkien, “The shadow can only mock, it cannot make.”^{xxi} The problem with making fun, is that you don’t actually make any fun, you make misery. If I laugh at others because I feel superior, I’m immediately filled with fear that they’ll laugh at me... and then laughter simply becomes an act or a weapon. Satan laughs, but he has never known fun, or joy... let alone ecstasy.

The Superiority Theory explains evil laughter, but not all laughter. It can't explain why a person would laugh at himself.

One morning in college I was frantically studying in one of the study carrels in the atrium and the CU Library, when I burped just a little and suddenly the study carrel filled with smoke, my throat felt like it was on fire, and my eyes burned. I had read some stories on spontaneous human combustion, and so immediately concluded that I was on fire and was instantly paralyzed with fear. And yet, in another instant I realized that the burning had stopped.

At the same time, I remembered that in my hurry that morning, I had taken a tetracycline pill for acne, and taken it without water. Suddenly I realized that it wasn't smoke that filled the study carrel and burned my throat and eyes; it was burped up zit medicine from a pill that had lodged in my throat, and then, dissolved. And suddenly, in that moment, I began laughing hysterically and fell out of the cubicle on the floor... laughing at myself.

The second theory of laughter, promoted by folks like Sigmund Freud, is the Relief Theory—it's the idea that laughter is the sudden release of nervous energy. The thought that I was on fire did make me a bit nervous and the realization that it was zit medicine instead of spontaneous human combustion was a relief.

But you don't have to be nervous to laugh. God laughs and I don't think he's nervous.

The third theory is called the Incongruity Theory and I think it encapsulates the other two. It's the idea that we laugh at the perception of something incongruous, particularly the incongruity between two perceptions of reality.

Spontaneous human combustion in a study carrel at CU is a different reality than burped up zit medicine. If the incongruity is resolved in a pleasant way, we laugh; it's a comedy. If the incongruity is unresolved or resolved in a negative way, if it turns out that I really am on fire... then we weep and wail; it's a tragedy.

And so, the difference between tragedy and comedy is a little faith in how the situation might be resolved... or not resolved. It's no wonder that comedians are often most in danger of suicide. They pay attention to the incongruous, but without a little faith, comedy becomes tragedy. And with a little faith maybe tragedy can become a comedy.

Dr. Evil laughed... but I bet you laughed at Dr. Evil. I bet that wasn't because you scorned Mike Myers or Dr. Evil. You laughed at the incongruity between his perception of reality and your own.

Well God's perception of reality, must be very different than our own, but according to Psalm 2, he laughs us to scorn, and holds us in derision... as if he wants to destroy us... or at least our perception of reality. For powerful and wealthy Americans, who consider themselves kings, Psalm 2 reads like a tragedy. But for poor, powerless and exiled Jews, perhaps it read more like a comedy, for one day Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, and Hitler would kiss the feet of the king of the Jews. A comedy and a tragedy.

Maybe it's both... but which is deepest? Does reality end in tears or laughter?

And yet, why would a Good Father want to laugh anyone to scorn?

Last week I asked, "Why would a good father hide his face?"

...and then remembered playing "peekaboo."

If I ask, "Why would a good father laugh at his own beloved children?"

...well I'm flooded with more memories than I can begin to convey.

When my boys were little, they were always doing something that would make me laugh, but it would offend them if they saw me laugh. One day when Becky was little and had some disagreement with me, that is when I was violating her will with my will, when she was being disciplined. She called my Mom and said, "Omah, you need to come over here right away and spank your son, because he's being bad!"

Do you ever think that God is being bad? Every time we sin, aren't we arguing that God's will is bad? Does he laugh?

I laughed and laughed at Becky, but I didn't let her know that I was laughing. But now she laughs. Coleman laughs at how he used to eat dirt... and Jon even laughs about the flaming toilet of death. My mom just passed, and I was just beginning to laugh at her stories of how my little sister would defend me against the bullies that lived up the street. I'm beginning to laugh at myself and my own cowardice.

Well, I laughed at my kids, and now my kids are starting to laugh with me at themselves. It's what we talk about at dinner on Thanksgiving. It's the substance of all of our best stories.

Every night when the children were little, we'd say prayers before bed. And every night Jon would end his by saying, "and thank you for Chuck E. Cheese." And Elizabeth would end her prayer by praying, "and thank you God that I know everything in the world. Amen."



After about half a year of this, I remember thinking, this view of reality may not work well for Elizabeth and a good dad, would help her see things differently... the biblical word for that is "repent."

One day she said to me, "Daddy, do killer whales live in lakes?" And I said, "No honey, killer whales don't live in lakes."

And she said, “Yes, they do...”
And I thought, “OK, here we go...”
And I said, “No they live in the ocean; they don’t live in lakes.”
We debated this intensely with tears, frustration and fury.

I would’ve laughed out loud, but I realized that that would’ve just been too mean... so I got angry.

(I can’t tell you the number of times, Susan and I would get angry at the kids—because we needed too—but then go into the next room and just start laughing.... See our wrath was more merciful than our laughter.)

I finally said, “No that’s it. Enough Elizabeth. They just don’t live in lakes.”
And Elizabeth screamed, “I’m calling Poppy”—that was my Dad—“I’m calling Poppy, because he’s been a pastor longer than you.”

I said “fine,” and I prayed that my Dad would speak the Truth, and not be seduced by the outrageous cuteness of my three-year old daughter.
She called, asked him, and praise God, he said, “No, Elizabeth, killer whales don’t live in lakes.”

And at that there was wailing, killer wailing; you would’ve thought Elizabeth had just experienced an absolute tragedy... and in a way she did. She learned that she was not the King of the Universe. It was a tragedy.

But now it’s a comedy, and she loves to laugh with us. I think she actually enjoys being my little girl, more than being the King of the Universe. She laughs with us, at herself, for her true self was getting trapped in her false self... and her true self is happy.

1 John 3:1 · Behold what manner of Love the Father has given unto us, that we should be called the little children of God... and that’s not just what we’re called, that’s who we really are... what we shall be has not yet appeared, but we know that we will be like him.^{xxii}

One day when Elizabeth was about four and we were visiting my parents, she said, “*Daddy can I have some gum?*” And I said “no.”
I said “no” because Elizabeth was addicted to gum—she didn’t just chew; she kept swallowing it and then asking for more.

She begged me and I said, “Honey, I’ll give you a piece of gum, if you listen to what I have to say, and chew it with me.”

I remember I took her up to my old bedroom. We sat on the bed, and I said “Elizabeth, I can’t give you more gum if you keep swallowing the gum, it’s not meant to be swallowed.” And then I handed her the gum.

She put it in her mouth, looked at me with those beautiful brown eyes, started chewing... and then began to preach. She said, “I know daddy (chewing chewing), we don’t swallow our gum. (chewing chewing) cause that’s bad for you (chewing chewing). And because I’m a big girl I can chew gum, like Jon can chew gum. Becky can’t chew gum cause she’s only two and she would swallow her gum. But I’m big and so I don’t swallow my gum, ‘cause swallowing gum is bad. You can be proud of me, ‘cause I know how to chew gum Daddy...”

Her sermonette lasted about a minute. She looked up at me smiling ear to ear...

And I said, “Honey, where’s your gum?”

And then I watched her face, as her perception of reality was utterly shattered by the cold hard reality, that she had swallowed her gum.

This look of absolute horror crossed her face. She literally threw herself across my lap, openly wailing, killer wailing, “I swallowed my gum. I’m not a big girl. I’m a little girl. Jon can chew gum and I can’t chew gum and I’ll never ever be able to chew gum...”

It was an absolute tragedy for Elizabeth, King of the World and Big Girl Gum Chewer—an absolute tragedy. But for me, it was a comedy... and it was a tragedy.

It was a tragedy, because what you do to Elizabeth you do to me, even if it’s Elizabeth that’s doing it to Elizabeth. I cried with her, for her, and in her. I mean, it was like we were both thrown together into that pit of sorrow we preached about last week.

I cried with her, for her, and in her... But, I laughed at her... deep inside.

I laughed at her... or at least her opinion of herself—her false self. And I laughed at her gum addiction.

Do you suppose that God laughs at your addictions? That he suffers them, but also laughs at them?

I was 99.99% sure that Elizabeth would one day be able to chew gum...



I don’t mean to brag, but these days, I don’t even have to ask Elizabeth if she’s swallowed her gum—30 yrs. old and I let her chew all the gum she wants. I’m not worried now, and I wasn’t worried then. Do you think God is worried about you? And your addictions?

So, I didn’t laugh because I was relieving nervous tension. And I didn’t laugh because I felt superior.

I mean, I didn’t laugh because she thought she was king of the world, and I proved to be king of the world. The truth is that she is the king of my world. She, her sister, and her brothers will inherit all that I have. And I would’ve gladly taken a bullet for her that day, even though she swallowed her gum.

I didn't laugh because I was superior, or because I was nervous. I laughed because of the incongruity between her perception of reality, and reality as it truly was, and is.

I laughed at Elizabeth telling me how capable she was, and I laughed at Elizabeth telling me that she'd never ever chew gum again. I laughed at Elizabeth, the success, and Elizabeth, the failure, because they are both the same ridiculous illusion. I laughed at the incongruity between how Elizabeth perceived herself and what I knew her to be.

I laughed, not because Elizabeth was less than she imagined. I laughed because she was far more than she could yet begin to perceive. I laughed, for this tragedy was a drop in an ocean of comedy—divine comedy.

I laughed at her ridiculous little ego. Her ego told her that if she could chew gum, she'd be really something: she'd be a big girl, king of the world, and impressive to her Daddy. But I knew she was already king of my world, and utterly impressive to me, and that it had absolutely nothing to do with her ability to chew gum. I laughed to myself, at herself, knowing that one day she'd laugh with me at herself at Thanksgiving dinner—and if she wanted, after dinner, we'd both chew gum in freedom.

Well Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer both developed the incongruity theory of humor, but in my opinion the most brilliant formulation of the theory comes from the Danish Philosopher Soren Kierkegaard. You may remember, because we've preached about it, that Kierkegaard divide existence into three spheres:

- First is the aesthetic sphere, when one simply takes and consumes the good like fruit from some tree, like a rich man buys houses or an addict drinks wine.
- Second is the ethical sphere, when one tries to earn the good, like a boy scout tries to earn merit badges or a pharisee tries to earn the kingdom—you use your knowledge of the good to make yourself good and get the Good.
- Third is the religious sphere (and he means "religious" in the best possible way). It's the realization that the Good is an absolute gift, not to be taken or earned but to be trusted and received. It's Grace through Faith.

Kierkegaard argued that "irony" marks the boundary between the first stage and the second stage. It marks the incongruity between tax collectors and Pharisees. So, we say, it's ironic that this famous pastor would preach family values, while sleeping with a hooker and then we laugh—a rather nervous, and evil, laugh.

Kierkegaard argued that irony marks the boundary between licentiousness and legalism. But it's something else that marks the boundary between legalism and the revelation of Grace... and that's "humor."

He wrote, "humor is the last stage of existential awareness before Faith," and he argued that Christianity is the most humorous view of life in world history.^{xxiii} Humor is the birth of faith...^{xxiv}

Kierkegaard's paragon of faith was Abraham and Sarah who gave birth to Isaac—that is *Yitschaq*, from *sachaq* (or *tsachaq*), meaning laughter. Isaac, the promised seed, is literally, in Hebrew, "he laughs."

People will cite Psalm 2 and say, "See, God is a tyrant with a wicked laugh." But we all seem to forget that Isaac, means laughter. And the first instance of the word "laugh," in all of Scripture is in Gen. 17 when Abraham laughs at God's Word: Abraham will father a son at 100 yrs. old.

In Gen. 18, Sarah overhears the promise and laughs. God says, "Why did you laugh? ...explain your theory of humor..."

Sarah says, "I didn't laugh."

God says, "No, Sarah you did laugh... [at me, and my Word]."

Sarah laughed, but God gets the last laugh; His Word is the Last Laugh.

In Gen. 21 Sarah gives birth to Isaac (that is, "he laughs") and she exclaims: "God has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh over me."

That is, "laugh at me... And I'll laugh with them."

Then in v. 12 God says, "Through Isaac (through laughter) shall your offspring be named."

That means that if you want to be a child of Abraham you can only get there through laughter... not through works of the flesh, only through Grace by faith.

In Gen. 22 God says to Abraham, "Take [he laughs], whom you love, and offer him to me." Can you imagine?

Yes... I think you can, for God asks a similar thing of each of us: "let go of laughter, let go of the one you love, let go of the promised blessing, let go of your everything..."

Well, I hope you see that God didn't want to take laughter from Abraham, but give laughter to Abraham... forever and without end... for he is the End. What God wanted Abraham to sacrifice was his ego, the illusion that he could create, save or redeem the promised blessing; that he could make laughter, when God was making him, with laughter.

So, Abraham laid his Isaac down, and Abraham received Isaac back... for a God/man stopped his hand and provided a full-grown lamb. Abraham lost laughter, received laughter back, and is still laughing. Abraham lost his life, received his life back, and will live forever without end, for Life is the End. Life is a gift, Jesus is the Life, and Jesus is the promised blessing.

"Through *Yitschaq* will your offspring be named," said God. Offspring is singular in Hebrew. It's literally, "seed," and that seed is Jesus—"Through laughter will Jesus be named." Through laughter you come to call on "God is Salvation," *Yeshua*, Jesus.

In Acts 13:33 Paul preaches about the resurrection of Jesus and says that it fulfilled what was written in the second Psalm,

**7b "You are my Son;
today I have begotten you..."**

That means that the promised seed was born when Jesus rose from the dead. It means laughter was born in the place of sorrow. Perhaps laughter is Jesus being born in your place of sorrow, today?

Jesus said, "you will weep and lament... but your sorrow will turn into joy" (John 16:20).

"Laughter is man's humble reaction," writes Karl Barth, "to the amazing and ridiculous fact of man being a recipient of God's honor."

“Laughter is the closest thing to the grace of God.”^{xxv}

So, what is it that keeps us from laughing? Well, isn’t it our pride? What was it that kept Elizabeth from laughing? Well, it was her need to know everything in the world and her idea that she could make herself good by chewing gum. It was her little ego. It was her desire to justify herself, but once she realized that she had always been justified, she could laugh and enjoy thanksgiving dinner.

What is it that keeps me from laughing? The idea that I have to preach a good sermon to make myself good and therefore win the Love of God. That’s the self that thinks it has to create, save, redeem and justify itself. That’s the self that continually tries to exalt itself. That’s my ego. That’s my old earthen vessel. That’s this body of death—that’s my pit of sorrow.

It’s not bad news that God will dash it to pieces like a potter’s vessel, for it is the potter’s vessel—the potter, who is capable of making new vessels. Maybe it’s Good News that Jesus might even laugh it to scorn.

The party starts once I laugh it to scorn with him...

- Once I stop trying to justify myself, for I realize I’m eternally justified.
- Once I stop trying to exalt myself, and begin to laugh at myself, and notice that god has already exalted me—he exalts the humble. I think it’s called laughter.
- Once I stop taking my self so seriously, because my Daddy takes me so seriously... that’s when the party starts.
- Once I stop taking this world so seriously and begin to laugh with the Lamb of God standing on the throne—I die with him and rise from the dead with him, laughing.^{xxvi}

In Acts 4:25 Peter and John quote Psalm 2. It would’ve been just after they were detained by the temple guard and possibly kept in the sacred pit that we preached about last week.



They preached. The temple guard threw them in prison, just as they’d likely thrown Jesus in that very same prison. Caiaphas threatened them but released them, not knowing how to punish them.

They immediately found their friends, quoted Psalm 2 about the way in which the kings of the earth rage against the Lord and his Messiah. Then they thanked God that all this persecution was going according to plan. Their sorrow turned to joy. The house they gathered in began to shake. They were filled with the Holy Spirit... and I bet they laughed.

- They laughed because God laughed at Caiaphas, Pilate, Herod, and Hitler.
- They laughed because God laughed at sin, death and hell.
- They laughed because God laughed at them and their own failure.
 - He laughed at John and his anger problems...
 - He laughed at Peter and his cowardice...
 - He laughed not because they were less than they knew but because they were so much more than they ever imagined.
- Jesus laughed on his throne, and in the sacred pit that is their own soul.
- He laughed at them, in them, and with them: John the beloved, and Peter the Rock.

When God laughs at you, laugh with him, for you are more than you know. Through laughter you name Jesus as Lord, join the Party, and keep laughing.

Laughter is the ability to rejoice at the death of your own ego. That's terrifying from one side of this table, but it a banquet of endless ecstasy on the other side.
It's Grace.

Communion

On the night Jesus was betrayed he took bread and broke it saying, "this is my body given to you." And in the same way, after supper and having given thanks he took the cup saying, "this is the covenant in my blood. Drink of it all of you."

This is a table of profound sorrow and endless joy. God is laughing, and he'd like you to join him. Come to the table and ingest the blessing into the depths of your pit.

Benediction

- 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs;
the Lord holds them in derision.**

But it's not an evil laugh, I suspect it looks a little more like this:

Video clip: *Mary Poppins*
Walt Disney Productions (1964)

A selection from the song "I Love to Laugh." Uncle Albert (Ed Wynn) is discovered laughing and floating near the ceiling. Over the course of the scene, it becomes clear that laughing is what is making him float; when Bert (Dick Van Dyke) begins to laugh, he floats up to join Uncle Albert. To the dismay of Mary Poppins (Julie Andrews), Jane (Karen Dotrice) and Michael (Matthew Garber) also join in the laughter and float up to join Bert and Uncle Albert.

If you remember Mary Poppins joins them on the ceiling and they have a party—a tea party. And you're going to a party, a great banquet, but I suspect you can only get there through laughter...

"Angels can fly because they take themselves lightly," wrote Chesterton.^{xxvii}

You must not take yourself so seriously. In fact, you have to lose yourself, to find yourself laughing.

Sit down and close your eyes:

Picture yourself and all your addictions, all your sorrows, all your shit. You're sitting at the end of a bed, and God is sitting on the other end. He's looking at you...

"Downward bends his burning eyes at mysteries so bright."

You are the mystery.

He looks at you like I looked at Elizabeth... And he laughs...

Does it mean that you can swallow your gum? NO. It means that he has already decided about you regardless of whether or not you swallow your gum.

He has already decided that you are worth everything to him. Look at his hands and feet. You are far more than you're even beginning to imagine.

He looks at you like I looked at Elizabeth... And he laughs... Would you laugh with him?

Would you believe the Gospel?

Amen

Endnotes

ⁱ Isaiah 53:2-3

ⁱⁱ 2 Corinthians 5:16 RSV

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 15:45

^{iv} 1 Timothy 2:14

^v When Adam fell, God's son fell; because of the true union made in heaven, God's son could not leave Adam, for by Adam I understand all men. Adam fell from life to death in the valley of this wretched world, and after that into hell. God's son fell with Adam into the valley of the virgin's womb (and she was the fairest daughter of Eve, in order to free Adam from guilt in heaven and in earth; and with this great power he fetched him out of hell.

The wisdom and the goodness in the servant represent God's son. That he was poorly dressed as a labourer and standing near the left-hand side represents Christ's Humanity and Adam with all the consequent trouble and weakness; for in this parable our good Lord showed his own son and Adam as but one man. The *strength* and goodness which we have come from Jesus Christ; the *weakness* and the blindness which we have come from Adam, and these two were represented in the servant."

- Julian of Norwich, Revelations of Divine Love. p.121

^{vi} Romans 5:14

^{vii} Because she did not have *the knowledge of Good and evil*, she did not know who she was—the *Mother of all living*, the *Mother of Life*.

^{viii} Romans 9:26

^{ix} Romans 5:20

x From Proverbs 23:7 (AV 1873)

xi Of course, human parents, really don't know entirely who their children are, but God is not an earthly parent—he knows the end from the beginning and his Word is the end and the beginning.

xii The stories are too graphic to tell, but she was horribly abused and lost several children in utterly terrifying ways as a victim of satanic ritual abuse. In multiple sessions of deliverance and prayer, Jesus would reveal that he had her children who were waiting for her to raise them. It's hard to express the shock and awe and joy of the moments in which Christ revealed that she was not the "Mother of Death" as the evil one had told her, but that she was the "Mother of Life" as God declared.

xiii Jesus is the Life and Jesus called himself the son of Man—that means humanity is his mother... old Adam, turns out to be Eve, and gives birth to the Christ and the New Creation.

xiv And when she does believe all her sorrow will turn into joy and all her mourning will turn into dancing... She may have *only been* a cover girl, who dated John F. Kennedy. But she *is* the Bride of Christ, who forever radiates the glory of God.

xv "Lord, I'm sorry," I pleaded, "but your presence is so overwhelming. How do I keep from feeling so small when I'm close to you like this?"

"You are small, but you must learn to abide in My presence without looking at yourself. You will not be able to hear from Me or speak for Me if you are looking at yourself. You will always be inadequate. You will always be unworthy for what I call you to do, but it will never be your adequacy or worthiness that causes Me to use you. You must not look at your inadequacy, but look to My adequacy. You must stop looking at your own unworthiness and look to My righteousness. When you are used, it is because of who I am, not who you are."

"You did feel My anger as you began to look at yourself. This is the anger I felt toward Moses when he started to complain about how inadequate he was. This only reveals that you are looking to yourself more than to Me, which is the main reason why I am able to use so few of My people for what I desire to do. This false humility is actually a form of the pride that caused the fall of man. Adam and Eve began to feel inadequate and that they needed to be more than I had made them to be. They took it upon themselves to make themselves into who they should be. You can never make yourself into who you should be, but you must trust Me to make you into who you should be."

- Rick Joyner, *The Call* (Charlotte, NC: Morning Star Publications, 1999), pp. 32-33

xvi Acts 4:25-26, 13:33; Hebrews 1:5, 5:5; Revelation 2:26-27, 12:5, 19:15

xvii It's interesting that this Psalm has no attribution in the Book of Psalms, yet in Acts 4:25 Luke, Peter and John attribute it to David

xviii God showed me that he [the Devil] is still as wicked as he was before the Incarnation and works as hard, but he continually sees that all chosen souls escape him gloriously, and that grieves him; for everything that God allows him to do turns into joy for us and into pain and shame for him; and that is because he may never do as much evil as he would wish, for God holds fast all the Devil's power in his own hand. I also saw our Lord scorn his wickedness and set him at nought, and he wants us to do the same. . . . Nevertheless, it pleases him that we should laugh to cheer ourselves, and rejoice in God because the Fiend has been conquered. And after this I became serious, and said, 'I can see three things: delight, scorn and seriousness. I see delight that the Fiend is defeated; I see scorn because God scorns him and he is to be scorned; and I see seriousness because he is defeated by the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ and by his death, which took place in all seriousness and with weary hardship.'

Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (London, England: Penguin Books, 1998), p. 13

xix 1 Cor. 15:24

xx https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theories_of_humor, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/humor/>

xxi J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983), p. 190.

xxii My paraphrase based on the Greek and several translations.

xxiii Like Schopenhauer, Søren Kierkegaard saw humor as based on incongruity and as philosophically significant. In his discussion of the "three spheres of existence," (the three existential stages of life—the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious), he discusses humor and its close relative, irony. Irony marks the boundary between the aesthetic and the

ethical spheres, while humor marks the boundary between the ethical and religious spheres. "Humor is the last stage of existential awareness before faith" (1846 [1941], 448, 259). The person with a religious view of life is likely to cultivate humor, he says, and Christianity is the most humorous view of life in world history ([JP], Entries 1681–1682). Kierkegaard (1846 [1941], 459–468) locates the essence of humor, which he calls "the comical," in a disparity between what is expected and what is experienced...

--[The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/humor/), "Philosophy of Humor"
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/humor/>

xxiv "Humor is a proof of faith." -Charles M. Schulz in *Chicken Soup for the Christian Soul*, "No Excuse Sunday," p. 228.

xxv Laughter is the closest thing to the grace of God. - Karl Barth

As quoted in *The Harper Book of Quotations* (1993) by Robert I. Fitzhenry, p. 223.

The first quote is one cited in previous sermons, but I need to find the reference.

xxvi In *Storytelling: Imagination and Faith*, William J. Bausch shares: "In the Greek Orthodox tradition, the day after Easter was devoted to telling jokes. . . . They felt they were imitating the cosmic joke that God pulled on Satan in the Resurrection. Satan thought he had won, and was smug in his victory, smiling to himself, having the last word. So he thought. Then God raised Jesus from the dead, and life and salvation became the last words."

-cited by Donald McCullough in *Christian Reader, Leadership*, Winter 1998, "Easter," p. 73

xxvii A characteristic of the great saints is their power of levity. Angels can fly because they can take themselves lightly. This has been always the instinct of Christendom, and especially the instinct of Christian art...

Every figure seems ready to fly up and float about in the heavens. The tattered cloak of the beggar will bear him up like the rayed plumes of the angels. But the kings in their heavy gold and the proud in their robes of purple will all of their nature sink downwards, for pride cannot rise to levity or levitation. Pride is the downward drag of all things into an easy solemnity. One "settles down" into a sort of selfish seriousness; but one has to rise to a gay self-forgetfulness. A man "falls" into a brown study; he reaches up at a blue sky. Seriousness is not a virtue. It would be a heresy, but a much more sensible heresy, to say that seriousness is a vice. It is really a natural trend or lapse into taking one's self gravely, because it is the easiest thing to do. It is much easier to write a good *Times* leading article than a good joke in *Punch*. For solemnity flows out of men naturally; but laughter is a leap. It is easy to be heavy; hard to be light. Satan fell by the force of gravity...

Christianity satisfies suddenly and perfectly man's ancestral instinct for being the right way up; satisfies it supremely in this; that by its creed joy becomes something gigantic and sadness something special and small. The vault above us is not deaf because the universe is an idiot; the silence is not the heartless silence of an endless and aimless world. Rather the silence around us is a small and pitiful stillness like the prompt stillness in a sickroom. We are perhaps permitted tragedy as a sort of merciful comedy: because the frantic energy of divine things would knock us down like a drunken farce. We can take our own tears more lightly than we could take the tremendous levities of the angels. So we sit perhaps in a starry chamber of silence while the laughter of the heavens is too loud for us to hear.

Joy, which was the small publicity of the pagan, is the gigantic secret of the Christian...

The tremendous figure which fills the Gospels towers in this respect, as in every other, above all the thinkers who ever thought themselves tall. His pathos was natural, almost casual. The Stoics, ancient and modern, were proud of concealing their tears. He never concealed His tears; He showed them plainly on His open face at any daily sight, such as the far sight of His native city. Yet He concealed something. Solemn supermen and imperial diplomatists are proud of restraining their anger. He never restrained His anger. He flung furniture down the front steps of the Temple, and asked men how they expected to escape the damnation of Hell. Yet he restrained something. I say it with reverence; there was in that shattering personality a thread that must be called shyness. There was something that He hid from all men when he went up a mountain to pray. There was something that He covered constantly by abrupt silence or impetuous isolation. There was some one thing that was too great for God to show us when He walked upon our earth; and I have sometimes fancied that it was His mirth.

- G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy: The Romance of Faith* (New York: Bantam, 1990), pp. 120-121, 160

Maybe the thing he hid, was his laughter at us, just as I hid my laughter at Elizabeth who thought she knew everything in the world, including the fact that killer whales live in lakes. I hid my laughter and revealed my wrath, for to a proud little ego wrath is more merciful than laughter.