

The Word became flesh  
Part 3

More of the playfulness of  
Jesus  
12/18/2011

The sign spinners on the street corner

What have you seen something in nature that made you laugh?

Perhaps you did not make the connection – that you were *meant* to laugh. That is was God who made you laugh. That he laughed with you. That God arranged for this event to unfold for no other purpose but to share a share with you?

What does it say about us that we honestly don't believe God has a sense of humor? How far have we strayed from his heart, from his personality? That it seldom, if ever crosses our minds, that God is playing with us. That he is trying to get us to laugh.

Elton Trueblood actually wrote a book called *The Humor of Christ*. It is thorough, scholarly and extremely dry. Which is actually pretty funny – a humorless book about God's sense of humor. What does it say about our Church-culture that such a book even needs to be written?

Does Jesus have a sense of humor?

Well, he created laughter.

If someone creates something, don't they have a better understanding and appreciation for it that someone who just sees it or enjoys it?

Therefore, we can say...that no one has a better sense of humor than God. God is the funniest person who ever lived. Think of the funniest comedian or actor that you know, they can make you laugh til you cry. God is that, times a "kazillion."

But somehow, through the religious fog, that permeates the church today, most of us believe that God sits around frowning, looking pious, Mr. Killjoy, Mr. I'm-Above-All-This.

This morning, I want to share with you 3 different stories, which reveal to us more of the playfulness of Jesus. I'm sure that you know each one of these but maybe it would be helpful to us to remember these stories from the perspective of God's playfulness:

Three weird stories from the Bible

1. Great grandparents with a newborn

*Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale*, Frederick Buechner.

"The place to start is with a woman laughing. She is an old woman, and, after a lifetime in the desert, her face is cracked and ruttled like a six-month drought. She hunches her shoulders around her ears and starts to shake. She squinnies her eyes shut, and her laughter is all China teeth and wheeze and tears running down as she rocks hard back and forth in her kitchen chair. She is laughing because she is pushing 91 hard and has just been told she is going to have a baby. Even though it was Jesus who told her, she can't control herself, and her husband can't control himself either. He keeps a straight face a few seconds longer than she doesn't but he ends by cracking up, too...

The old woman's name is Sarah, of course, and the old man's name is Abraham, and they are laughing at the idea of a baby being born in the geriatric ward and Medicare picking up the tab. They are laughing because Jesus not only seems to believe it but seems to expect them to believe it too.

They are laughing because with part of themselves they do believe it...They are laughing because if by some crazy chance it should just happen to come true, then they really would have something to laugh about.

Old enough to be great-grand parents, Abraham and Sarah are swapping the walker for a stroller. It's just too funny! The arthritic patriarch and his wrinkled wife try and hid they laughter from the living God but God seals the humor of the whole thing himself by naming Isaac for them. Laughter.

“Sarah said, “God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me.” Gen 21:6

It was God that gave you a sense of humor.  
Do you think that Jesus came to take it away?

## 2. Taxes, a fish and a coin

“After Jesus and his disciples arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax came to Peter and asked, “Doesn't your teacher pay the temple tax?” Yes, he does,” he replied.

When Peter came into the house, Jesus was the first to speak. “What do you think, Simon? he asked. From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes—from their own children or from others? From others, Peter answered.

Then the children are exempt, Jesus said to him. But so that we may not cause offense, go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours.” Matthew 17:24-27

What? This is a mighty strange little story. Doesn't it sound more like an Irish fairy tale? What is it with the fishing trip? If you remove the personality of Jesus from the scene and insert the usual religious fog, ethereal, ghost-like personality of Jesus starrng off into the realms unknown – you wind up with nothing but bizarre interpretations.

Insert the personality of Jesus and you see Jesus playing with one of his closest friends in the world.

“Peter, I'll tell you what I need you to do...”

And he sends the fisherman fishing.

Give's him some time to sort things out...doing the thing that he loves the most. Fishing. Don't you see the humor?

Peter is all in a wad with the leaders from his village and Jesus playfully, smiles, winks and with a tilt of the head, says “go on and play / relax / enjoy. Go fishing. I'll take care of things.”

## 3. First Impressions

“The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida.

Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit. How do you know me? Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you. Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.

Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” John 1:43-50

Keep in mind that Jesus is meeting the boys for the first time. Jesus knows what is about to unfold, all that these lads will be swept up into:

Turning the water into wine  
Feeding the 5,000  
Commanding the storm to cease  
Raising Lazarus from the dead

Nathaniel asks...How do you know me?  
I saw you sitting under the fig tree before Philip came to get you.

Nathaniel hits his knees..."you are the son of God, the King of Israel."

Jesus' response is priceless: "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree?" (oh, and that wise crack about my home town, Nazereth...that really hurt)

Another wink, a raise eyebrow, a tilt of the head and a raised hand gesture

What he seems to be really saying is..."Wow, kid. You're easily impressed. Stick with me. You ain't seen nothing yet.

How funny, human, personal, real and "unspiritual" this whole little meeting turned out.