



ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

SERMON Holy Humor 2017

So do you like surprises??? I suppose it depends a bit on what kind of surprise – and the mood you're in

I remember what I thought was one of my best executed surprises. Our home has two stairways to the basement. One is right inside a back hallway door and the other is in a small hallway between the kitchen and bedrooms. One evening after dinner I left my mom and younger siblings reading together in a couch in our kitchen. I was headed back to school for a play practice. I had walked about a block when I remembered that practice had been cancelled that evening. As I got to the back door of our house I decided I would surprise my family with a sudden entrance that they weren't expecting. So, I quietly snuck in the back door, went down the stairs, circled around and came up the other stairs next to the kitchen. Slowly, slowly I began to open the stairs door – when one of my sisters saw the door opening and screamed. My mom jumped up terrified, grabbed the kids and headed to the back of the house. I opened the door yelling after them – “Surprise!” Nobody liked my surprise. My mom was furious – telling me never to do something like that again.

But really I was just following in Jesus' footsteps! Look – he not only does the same thing once – he does it twice. There he is appearing in a room filled with fearful people – entering through locked doors and saying – Peace! We're not told that those disciples scolded him – we're told they rejoiced when they saw him. I guess my mom wouldn't make a good disciple. Or maybe it'd be better received if I were Christ. But still – SURPRISE – here I am!!! Surprise!

I think Jesus and God like surprises. I think God and Jesus like rejoicing. I mean, consider the first miracle – turning water into wine at a wedding???? Where was that miracle going to lead to? And what about the story of the Prodigal son – what does that dad do when his son returns??? Throws a party!! Which grumps out the other brother – sort of like my mom – maybe he doesn't like surprises.

And consider Caiaphas and all of his crowd. Can't you just imagine them sitting around congratulating each other on getting rid of that troublemaker Jesus – that fool who kept doing things improperly. But they had done their duty; they had justified the authority vested in them by efficiently disposing once and for all of a dangerous wanderer. He is safely dead. And with solemn calm again restored they can concentrate once more on the really serious matters to which their lives are dedicated. But behind their backs, without them having the slightest inkling of what is going on – the fool has popped up again like a jack-in-the-box and is moving around

even more vigorously than before and more compellingly. He's showing up in locked rooms, soon you'll hear – he's showing up walking along the road to Emmaus, he's showing up on the beach cooking fish, he's showing up all over the place – until he shows up ascending into heaven in a cloud of glory.

Jesus must have liked surprises – and I have no doubt he and God continue to surprise us still. Pay attention. God wants us to rejoice – God would have us blessed and believing and filled with peace and ready to be surprised.

Of course not all surprises come from God. There was this friend of mine driving down in Denver and he noticed the speed camera above him and wondered about the picture it was taking of him – even though he knew he wasn't speeding. So, for fun he circled back around and went by the camera really slowly. And then he circled around and honked, and then he circled around and waved – each time going slower and slower. Five weeks later he received four citations in the mail for not wearing a seat belt!

Surprise!

Thanks be to God.