

PRESIDER'S VERSION



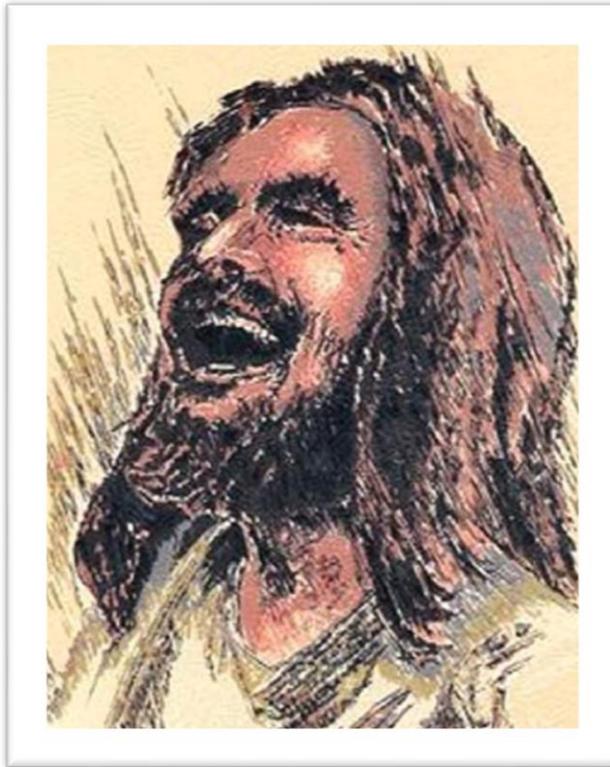
Birchcliff Bluffs United Church

Ministers: All the People – wherever and however they gather

The Rev. Gregory Daly: revgregbbuc@rogers.com

Music Director: Randy Vancourt

April 19, 2020 – Holy Humour Sunday



*Willis Wheatley "Jesus Christ Liberator" 1973
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He Told Me a Joke

by Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)

*"God told me a joke.
And seeing God laugh
has done more for me
than any scripture
I will ever read."*

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WE GATHER AS GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude

Call to Worship

Holy Joyous God,

you fill the world with joy and laughter,
the wagging of tails, the playfulness of primates,
clowns, comedians, and witty remarks.

Fill us with your joyful laughter,

that we may celebrate your presence
and the richness of life as we worship together.

Sung Response

Welcome, Happy Morning (v.2)

VU 161

**Earth with joyful welcome clothes itself for spring;
greeted with life reviving our returning kin:
flowers in every pasture, leaves on every bough,
speak of sorrows ended; Jesus triumphs now!
Welcome, happy morning! age to age shall say;
hell today is vanquished, heaven is won today!**

Life and Work of the Church



Lighting the Candle & Land Acknowledgement



First Joke of the Service...

How many music directors does it take to change a light bulb?

No one knows, because no one ever watches the director!



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Opening Hymn

Take Time to be Funny

(Tune: VU 672)

*Take time to be funny, rejoice in the world
Let laughter explode and have fun with God's Word
For laughter is healing, gives strength to the weak
God loves to see smiles, they lift up the meek.*

*Take time to be silly, it's good for the soul
Too many are somber, and seek to control.
Let go and let God's love wash over your soul
Heavenly transcendence can be your life's goal.*

*For humour is holy, it sanctifies life,
Replenishes hope and helps offer advice
It undercuts sorrow, deflates haughty pride
So smile and hang on, rejoicing in the ride.*

Opening Prayer

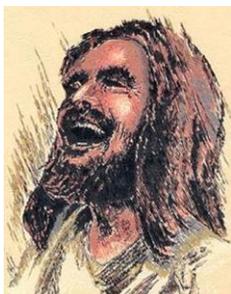
*O Great Laughing God,
we come into your presence with joy and longing to be surprised.
We thank you that you have given to us the gift of laughter and delight.
These things give hints as to the nature of your purpose for us and for all the earth.
May we find that in giving up to laughter
there is healing and hope and abundance and blessing.
Tickle our souls with the brush of your Spirit to renew our worship and our living.
Amen. **

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD



A Song from the Church Lady

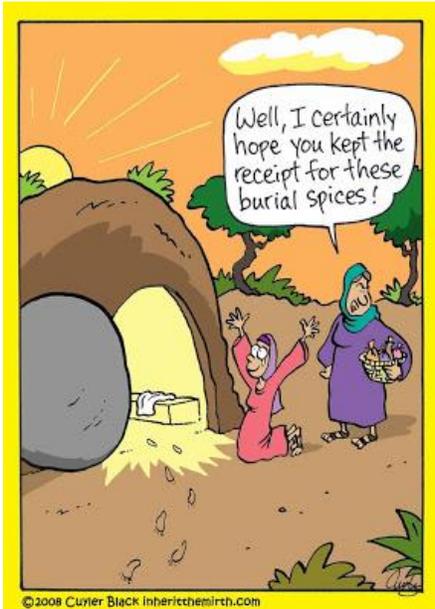
And Now for Something Completely Different...



Where did Laughing Jesus Come From?

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And another Joke...



You know you are from a rural church when...

- *The Call to Worship is, "Y'all come on in!"*
- *The only time people lock their cars in the parking lot is during the summer and then only so their Neighbours can't leave them a bag of squash.*
- *The minister has rubber boots on under their Alb*
- *Finding and returning lost sheep is not just a parable.*
- *High notes on the organ make dogs outside howl.*
- *Opening day of deer hunting season is recognized as a church holiday.*
- *The final words of the benediction are, "Y'all come on back now, ya hear!"*

Prayer of Illumination

Help us O God, to come to you with open lives to receive your words.

May their rich language help us to take ourselves less seriously as we listen.

Open our hearts as we embark on life's journey with each other and with you. Amen

Genesis 18: 1-15

The Message

GOD appeared to Abraham at the Oaks of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent. It was the hottest part of the day. He looked up and saw three strangers standing. He ran from his tent to greet them and bowed before them.

³⁻⁵ He said, "If it please you, stop for a while with your servants. I'll get some water so you can wash your feet. Rest under this tree. I'll get some food to refresh you on your way, since your travels have brought you across my path."

They said, "Certainly. Go ahead."

⁶ Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. He said, "Hurry. Get three cups of our best flour; knead it and make bread."

⁷⁻⁸ Then Abraham ran to the cattle pen and picked out a nice plump calf and gave it to the servant who lost no time getting it ready. Then he got curds and milk, brought them with the calf that had been roasted, set the meal before them, and stood there under the tree while they ate.

⁹ The strangers said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?"

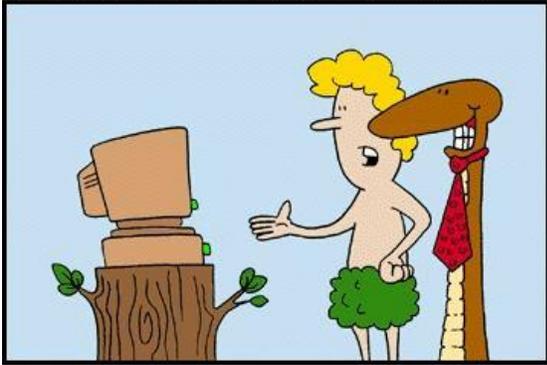
He said, "In the tent."

¹⁰ One of them said, "I'm coming back about this time next year. When I arrive, your wife Sarah will have a son." Sarah was listening at the tent opening, just behind them.

¹¹⁻¹² Abraham and Sarah were old by this time, very old. Sarah was far past the age for having babies. Sarah laughed within herself, "An old woman like me? Get pregnant? With this old man of a husband?"

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(See Genesis 3)

12-15-1997

WELL MISTER, IT'S A NIFTY COMPUTER AND ALL, BUT I'VE GOT THIS NAGGING FEELING THAT I SHOULD REALLY AVOID APPLES

¹³⁻¹⁴ GOD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh saying, ‘Me? Have a baby? An old woman like me?’ Is anything too hard for GOD? I’ll be back about this time next year and Sarah will have a baby.”

¹⁵ Sarah lied. She said, “I didn’t laugh,” because she was afraid. But GOD said, “Yes you did; you laughed.”

Reflection on Sarah’s Response to God

Hymn:

Give To Us Laughter (v.1)

VU 624

*Give to us laughter, O Source of our life.
Laughter can banish so much of our strife.
Laughter and love give us wholeness and health.
Laughter and love are the coin of true wealth.*

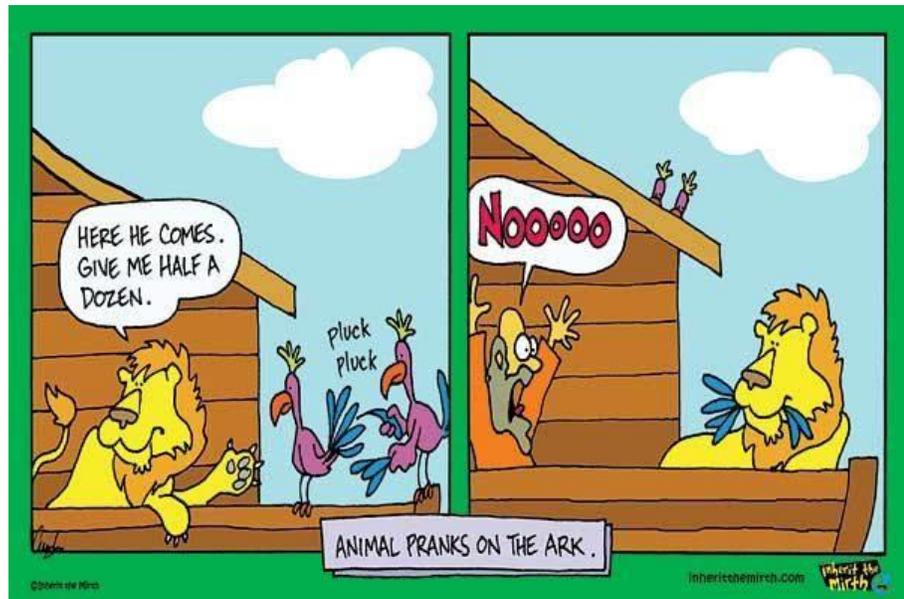
Genesis 21:1-6

The Message

⁴ GOD visited Sarah exactly as GOD said; GOD did for Sarah what was promised: Sarah became pregnant and gave Sarah and Abraham a child in their old age, and at the very time God had set. The child was named Isaac. When Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him just as God had commanded.

⁵⁻⁶ Abraham was a hundred years old when Isaac was born.

Sarah said, God has blessed me with laughter and all who get the news will laugh with me!



Reflection on Sarah’s Realization about Laughter

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Hymn:

Give To Us Laughter (v.2)

VU 624

*Give to us laughter as sign of deep joy;
let us in laughing find Christian employ,
joining with stars and with bright northern lights,
laughing and praising and sharing delights.*

Ecclesiastes 3: 1-4

The Message

There's an opportune time to do things, a right time for everything on the earth:



²⁻⁸ A right time for birth and another for death,
A right time to plant and another to reap,
A right time to kill and another to heal,
A right time to destroy and another to construct,
A right time to cry and another to laugh,
A right time to lament and another to cheer,
A right time to make love and another to abstain,
A right time to embrace and another to part,
A right time to search and another to count your losses,
A right time to hold on and another to let go,
A right time to rip out and another to mend,
A right time to shut up and another to speak up,
A right time to love and another to hate,
A right time to wage war and another to make peace.

Reflection on our Time

Hymn:

Give To Us Laughter (v.3)

VU 624

*Why do we worry that we will lose face?
Why act like king for the whole human race?
Often in family, and often with friend,
laughing at pride causes anguish to end.*

Proverbs 17:22

New Revised Standard Version

A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones.

Reflection on Ironic Reading

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Hymn (verse):

Give To Us Laughter (v.4)

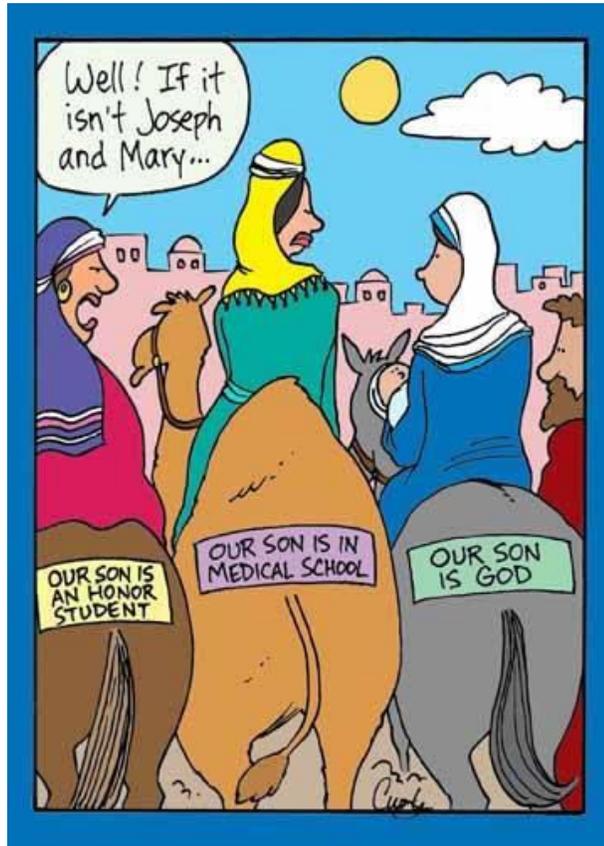
VU 624

*Even in sorrow and hours of grief,
laughter with tears brings most healing relief.
God, give us laughter, and God, give us peace,
joys of your presence among us increase.*

John 20:19-31

New Revised Standard Version

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 Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. 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." 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." ²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin^[a]), 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."



²⁶A week later his 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."

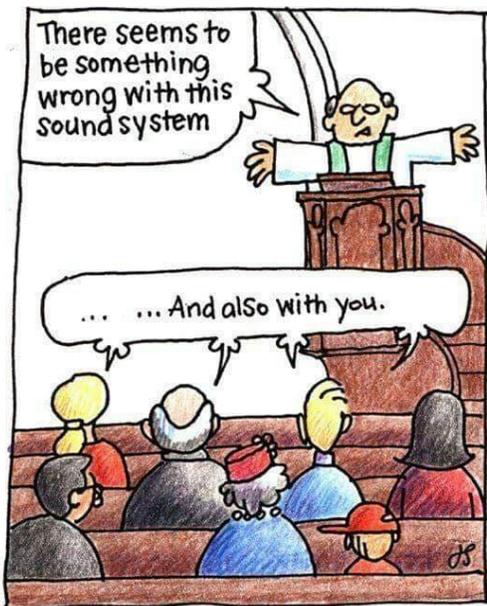
³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe^[b] that Jesus is the Messiah,^[c] the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

The word of God for the People of God
Thanks be to God

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A Question to Ponder...

God, are you Still Here?



A pun:

When the stars are out, they are visible, but when the lights are out, they are invisible. When I wind up my watch, it starts, but when I wind up my sermon, it ends.

Amen

Hymn

He Lives!

*Rejoice, for the Saviour has risen,
And gone is the darkness of night;
The stone has been rolled from the prison;
He lives in His glory and might*

*He lives! O be glad on the earth!
He lives! Jesus lives!
Up from the grave He rose to save!
He lives, the Conq'ror lives!*

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*Rejoice in the glad Gospel story;
Rejoice in the promise it gives
That we shall behold Him in glory;
Rejoice, for we know Jesus lives.*

*He lives! O be glad on the earth!
He lives! Jesus lives!
Up from the grave He rose to save!
He lives, the Cong'ror lives!*

*Rejoice for the joy it is bringing,
The hope of a glad, brighter day;
O listen, while the angels are singing;
Go, bear you the message away.*

*He lives! O be glad on the earth!
He lives! Jesus lives!
Up from the grave He rose to save!
He lives, the Cong'ror lives!*



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WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

Offering Humour

A little nine-year-old girl was in church with her mother when she started feeling ill.
"Mommy" she said "Can we leave now?"
"No" her mother replied.
"Well, I think I have to throw up!"
"Then go out the front door and around to the back of the church and throw up behind a bush."
In about two minutes the little girl returned to her seat.
"Did you throw up?" her mother asked.
"Yes" the little girl replied.
"Well, how could you have gone all the way to the back of the church and return so quickly?"
"I didn't have to go out of the church, Mommy" the little girl replied, "They have a box next to the front door that says 'for the sick'."

Offering Response

*O joyous Creator, we pray:
May the laughter of our worship be in the gifts we share,
that your joy may fill the earth. Amen.*

Another joke or two:

A person had just died and was on their way to heaven. When they got to the gates of heaven they met an angel. The angel asked if the person knew what God's name was.

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*'Oh, that's easy,' the person replied, 'God's name is Andy.'
'What make you think it's Andy?' the angel asked incredulously.
'Well, you see at Church we used to sing this song 'Andy walks with me, Andy talks with me.'*

Prayers of the People



Amid the laughter and celebration of this day, it's good that we pause and remember that many of us carry burdens that need not be carried alone. Let us pray...

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
for ever and ever. Amen.*



BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

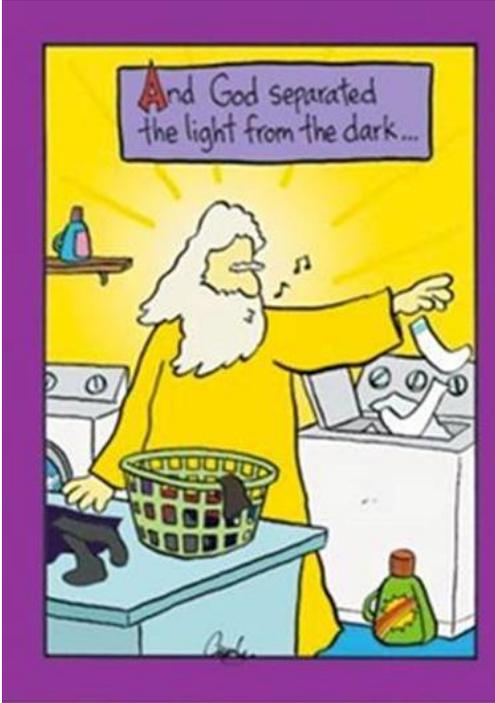
Closing Hymn

Joyful, Joyful We Adore You

VU 232

*Joyful, joyful we adore you,
God of glory, life and love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive the gloom of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.*

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*All your works with joy surround you,
earth and heaven reflect your rays,
stars and angels sing around you,
centre of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain,
sound their praise eternally.*

*Mortals join the mighty chorus
which the morning stars began;
God's own love is reigning o'er us,
joining people hand in hand.
Ever singing, march we onward,
victors in the midst of strife;
joyful music leads us sunward
in the triumph song of life.*

Benediction and Commissioning

The Laughing One called us together
so, we could share in the laughter of life.
The Laughing One sends us out,
to carry the joy of life and love to the world.
Go out to laugh, to live to love.
And when you hear a good joke...
remember that sharing is a great thing!

Y'all come back now ya hear?



Postlude

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Acknowledgements

**Opening Prayer: Bay of Quinte Conference United Church of Canada*

Laughing Jesus Resources

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1946&dat=19731228&id=jRMyAAAAIBAJ&sjid=6aEFAAAIBAJ&pg=5346,2333239>

<https://vancouversun.com/news/staff-blogs/meet-the-creator-of-the-laughing-jesus-photo/>

Other Resources for Today

Other readings from the lectionary for today

Acts 2:14a, 22-32 (NRSV)

¹⁴ But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them:

²² “You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— ²³ this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. ²⁴ But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. ²⁵ For David says concerning him,

‘I saw the Lord always before me,

for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;

²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will live in hope.

²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One experience corruption.

²⁸ You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’

²⁹ “Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

‘He was not abandoned to Hades,

nor did his flesh experience corruption.’

³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.

Psalm 16 (NRSV)

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

² I say to the LORD, “You are my Lord;

I have no good apart from you.”

³ As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble,
in whom is all my delight.

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- ⁴ Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names upon my lips.
- ⁵ The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
- ⁶ The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
I have a goodly heritage.
- ⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
- ⁸ I keep the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
- ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;
my body also rests secure.
- ¹⁰ For you do not give me up to Sheol,
or let your faithful one see the Pit.
- ¹¹ You show me the path of life.
In your presence there is fullness of joy;
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

1 Peter 1:3-9 (NRSV)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, ⁷ so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸ Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, ⁹ for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.