

A Holy Chuckle

> Winn Collier

SCRIPTURE TELLS US THERE is “a time to weep” (Ecclesiastes 3:4). Our world is in miserable shape, and when we confront all its ugliness, sadness is a good response. Many of us are disillusioned with the wide-grinned, slap-happy version of Christianity, the sort that peddles in cliché and ignores the brokenness staring us in the face. There is a time, probably many times, when smiles are entirely out of place, when tears of Psalm-like lament are essential to honest faith. This is why Ecclesiastes tells us there is a time when we should weep, a time when we should mourn. We should experience these things. It’s right.

However, tears do not always indicate authenticity. To mourn is not necessarily evidence that I see the world and am grappling honestly with the dissonance between the Gospel hope I believe and the real-world despair I see. Sometimes, my mourning, my melancholy spirituality, is a way of hiding. If I allow myself to believe that sadness and disappointment and weeping is all there is, then I am no longer compelled to hope. And if I do not hope, then I will never be disappointed. But here is the rub: Without hope, there is no faith (Hebrews 11:1).

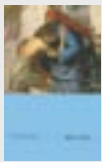
So, sorrow has its place in a rooted, human spirituality; but it should never consume all the space. It should never identify us. It is Jesus who defines who we are. And Jesus is about resurrection and renewal, about making dead things come to life. To live in the way of Jesus is to live in the way of faith and hope and love. Christian sorrow is a true sorrow, but it is a sorrow that waits in expectation of the One who will undo it. Christian sorrow takes honest stock of the desperation around us—and then it hopes for Jesus to intervene for our good. And this is what Jesus loves to do—to intervene for our good.

This redemptive hope is why Ecclesiastes tells us that in addition to weeping and mourning, there is “a time to laugh” (Ecclesiastes 3:4). Ecclesiastes tells us there are times to dance, to get silly with the joy that comes from knowing that our God is moving (though in His time and in His way) for us. When my wife, Miska, said, “I do”; when my 4-year-old son, Wyatt, learned how to use the phone and began a deluge of recorded “I love you, Daddy” messages; when I mountain-biked in the stunning ruggedness of Moab, Utah—these are times when the Spirit calls my soul to laugh, to dance and leap and drink in the simple hope all around me.

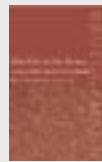
Karl Barth said that “laughter is the closest thing to the grace of God.” I believe it. There is deep grace in a holy chuckle. 🍷

DIG DEEPER
Ecclesiastes 3
Revelation 21
Psalm 90
Psalm 30

DEEPER WALK RECOMMENDS



Redemption
by Alister McGrath
(Fortress Press)
> Nothing brings us more freedom and joy than the truth that we are redeemed in Jesus. McGrath’s work weaves biblical themes with fine art to allow us to ponder and experience the truth of redemption.



Like Fire in the Bones: Listening for the Prophetic Word in Jeremiah
by Walter Brueggemann
(Fortress Press)
> Known as the weeping prophet, Jeremiah knew tears. In this scholarly work, Brueggemann provides a wide-ranging conversation with Jeremiah and tells us of a man who lived God’s truth in this world. Brueggemann invites us to do the same.



Thinking About God: First Steps in Philosophy
by Gregory E. Ganssle
(IVP)
> What (and how) we think about God gets to the core of things. Ganssle provides a helpful, introductory guide for many of the most basic philosophical hurdles surrounding matters of faith.



WINN COLLIER is the author of *Restless Faith*. You can connect with him at www.winncollier.com.