

May 6, 2020

Humour & Stress

If you are like me you have either read, watched, or heard something in the last six weeks related to the pandemic that has caused you to chuckle. This is good, according to published studies which explore the interrelationship between stress and humour. People who study these kinds of things have identified the role of humour in aiding people to re-frame a stressful situation (call to mind my reflection two weeks back on perspective), to problem solve amidst the stress, and to cope well with the adverse physical effects of stress.¹

In a Sunday evening Zoom event with Patty's family which is spread across Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba we got to talking about the relaxation of the stringent rules of social distancing. An Alberta Friesen predicted large caravans of Albertans streaming into Saskatchewan to visit a golf course en-route to a Manitoba restaurant patio for a drink with a hair cut to follow. We all laughed! People are desperate to get out to such places. Are the openings responsible? Is it too glib to laugh about the stress of people working who do not feel safe doing so or the serious risk of inter-Provincial travel? If we don't laugh we might cry. And crying may not be the worst thing either.

In my garage SARCAN recycling is in danger of crowding out the bikes and vehicles. On my daily walks I often take a bag in an effort to redeem the unredeemed—worthy litter just waiting a return of deposit. It is almost getting to be a problem for the garage and the household, I lamented to a church person. This resulted in the following image being sent my way.



¹ <https://www.degruyter.com/view/journals/humr/15/4/article-p365.xml>

COVID-19 has indeed caused systemic stress, and laughter has mitigated the stress to a certain level. But we also live with personal sources of stress. Mistakes and failures happen; many are affected by downturns in the economy, in health, and in social interaction. These too cause stress. Laughter, or at least light heartedness, is important in these situations as well. I hope to continue this topic in my next sermon (May 17), so we will return to the theme at that point.

I will close this mid-week reflection with an item that has circulated widely. It was forwarded to me by one of our dear friends living at Bethany Manor. It is geared for an American audience, and I suppose lingering citizenship in that North American epicenter of COVID-19 adds to humour. I edited the text to make it worthy of congregational circulation.

New Government Notice

To help save the economy, the Government will announce next month that the Immigration Department will start deporting seniors (instead of illegals) in order to lower Social Security and Medicare costs. Older people are easier to catch and will not remember how to get back home. Be sure to send this notice to your relatives and friends, so they will know what happened to you. I started to cry when I thought of you. Then, it dawned on me; I'll see you on the _____ bus.

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