

In Luke 7:33-34, Jesus pithily and wittily highlights the absurdity of the way He is perceived by some. He says: *“For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine; and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ The Son of Man has come eating and drinking; and you say, ‘Behold, a glutton and a drunkard.....”*. Finally, Jesus could take in good part a bit of gentle mockery of Himself. When Philip the apostle found Nathaniel and told him (John 1:43-49) that they had found the Messiah and that He was *“Jesus of Nazareth”*, Nathaniel retorted, *“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”* Philip told him to come and see. When Jesus saw Nathaniel coming He said: *“Behold an Israelite ...in whom there is no guile!”* This was a generous response to Nathaniel’s blunt remark. I will finish this short series on Jesus and humour by quoting an Episcopal priest who, I believe, nicely sums up the position. He says: *“There’s nothing worse than a humourless Christian .....Jesus uses humour to teach, heal, convert and, ultimately, redeem.....The humour of Jesus is subtle, nearly imperceptible at first glance. The Sermon on the Mount, for instance, doesn’t begin with a joke to warm up the crowd. But throughout his ministry Jesus displays great wit, command of the language, a gift for irony and word plays, and impeccable timing....”*

**-Stephen S**

**Entrance antiphon: Be my protector, O God, a mighty stronghold to save me. For you are my rock, my stronghold! Lead me, guide me, for the sake of your name.**

**First Reading: Ecclesiasticus 15: 15-20**

**Psalms 118: Response: They are happy who follow God’s law!**

**Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 2: 6-10**

**Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Speak, Lord, your servant is listening: you have the message of eternal life. Alleluia!**

**Gospel: Matthew 5:17-37**

**Memorial Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.**

**Communion Antiphon: They ate and had their fill, and what they craved the Lord gave them; they were not disappointed in what they craved.**



## Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Cycle A, 2023 Weekly Reflection: Jesus’ use of humour: (3) Of bushels, tunics, gluttons and drunkards:** In the last article

we saw how humour has to be appreciated in the context of the time and place where it is used. It is also difficult to be sure, when examining what Jesus said and recognising possible humour in it, whether Jesus was actually intending to use humour. Here are a couple of examples from, perhaps surprisingly, the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew ch. 5)

**First**, at verses 14-15, Jesus says that nobody lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel (a small bowl), but rather they put it on a stand to give light to the house. This is said to illustrate to his disciples that their light must shine before men. The background is that Jewish people were not allowed to put out the Sabbath light before the end of the day. If the lamp came to be a fire risk, they could then cover it with a bushel. A disciple hearing Jesus may well have smiled at the suggestion that anybody, seeing a light put under a bushel, might believe that it had been placed there to light the house. Similarly, Jesus is emphasising that it was obvious that the disciples must spread the Good News.

**Secondly**, at verses 38-42, Jesus refers to turning the other cheek and continues: *“...if anyone would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well....”*. Jewish men at the time wore two main pieces of clothing, the coat/tunic which was underneath a cloak. The cloak was the more valuable and also served as a sleep blanket. Exodus 22:26-27 makes it clear that if a creditor took a debtor’s cloak as a pledge, he should restore it to the debtor overnight, stating: *“...for that is his only covering...in what else shall he sleep?”* The situation envisaged by Jesus, I suggest with a tinge of humour, is that if someone is prepared to sue you for the shirt off your back, you should give him your cloak/blanket as well. You would then be stripped semi-naked in court, effectively left with nothing. This presses home the point that we should do all in our power to avoid conflict.