

Patricia Wilkinson reminds us of the importance of simply being, laughing, and resting as part of our walk with Christ

LAUGH OFTEN

It has often been said that laughter is the best medicine. After the events of the last 18 months, it seems as though there hasn't been a lot to smile and laugh about. And when we do, there can almost be a sense of guilt that we enjoy things when people around us are dying and suffering.

The Gospels give us glimpses of Jesus teaching, healing, and challenging. He was always serious, spending nights in prayer. When he was invited out for a meal, it was constantly disrupted by unexpected and uninvited guests or as he challenged his host's thinking and beliefs.

Is this really who Jesus was? If it was, would the disciples have followed him for three years and become friends? There would have been plenty of ordinary evenings that are not recorded; times spent around a campfire or in the houses of friends, relaxing with a cup of wine; time just to be.

The disciples and Jesus were doing what friends do. Swapping stories about what had happened recently, Andrew getting lost, Thomas forgetting to buy the bread, and a goat eating Thaddeus's cloak. There would be times of reminiscence: Bartholomew saying, 'tell us the one about the camel trying to pass through the eye of a needle again'. They would just enjoy being together; laughing with, not at, each other, telling jokes – everyday things.

This is what we have missed during the pandemic. It is not quite the same over Zoom. There have been lighter moments at work, chances to relax, humour in the situations in which we have found ourselves, but this is not the same as being together as friends. It is possible to think, 'can we, should we be enjoying this moment?' I would say yes, we all need humour and laughter. The Companions and Community of the Scargill Movement promise to 'enjoy giving and receiving lots of treats – and laugh often'.¹

May we take our faith seriously but never be too serious about it. In the words of one of the Iona Evening Prayers: 'Come Lord Jesus, you too were tired when day was done; you met your friends at evening time...you too enjoyed when nights drew on; you told your tales at the close of day'.² May we follow the example of Jesus and his friends. May we never feel guilty about being together, enjoying each others company, telling stories, and laughing together.

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references (accessed 25/8/21)

1. scargillmovement.org/community/rule-of-life
2. Wild Goose Worship Group (Iona Community). *Evening Prayer*. Iona: Wild Goose Resource Group, 1999. bit.ly/3INfmtq