

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the risen Savior,  
Jesus Christ, amen.

He is risen! He is risen indeed, alleluia! It seems like forever that we've been going through this pandemic. Over a year now... For many people it's been a very long and sad time. This year we're close to being back to normal, whatever that is, and so, I figured we could all use a small dose of Holy Humor. We're still learning and adapting to worshipping online and using streaming video on FaceBook and YouTube but it's good to know that the more things change the more they stay the same... (SLIDE) Is this how you set up your worship space at home each Sunday? If not, this template might help you feel more like "Church..."

Over the past year I've thought about what Jesus might do and say during a virus pandemic. Here's a few of the saying Jesus might have said from the past year... "If someone takes your toilet paper, give them your hand get also..." At the feeding of the 5000, Jesus told the disciples to have the crowd sit in rows at least 6 feet apart... If the last Supper was held today it would of course have to be done in a Zoom meeting. (SLIDE) Judas was late for everything...

We've done a few baptisms during this corona virus, but none as creatively as this one pastor who seems to have forgotten we Baptize in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, not in the name of Super Soaker...

(SLIDE)

I was in the men's room a few weeks ago and noticed this sign as I was washing my hands... (SLIDE) I'll be staying after Worship today in case anyone wants to come by for Confession...

I think we need to get our children back into Sunday School as soon as possible. The other day I overheard a conversation between a child and her mom. The little girl asked what Jesus first words were when he came out of the tomb. The mom explained that Jesus first words were not in the Bible, but the girl quickly replied, I know what he said. When he came out of the tomb. What asked her mother. He shouted TaDa!

I think I need to stop here, before I get into any more trouble... The idea for Holy Humor isn't new. It's a tradition extending to some of the earliest Christian theologians who noted that God played a practical joke on the devil by raising Jesus from the dead. Easter was "God's supreme joke played on death." All of our Sunday Worship services should be filled with joy and laughter. In the church, for of the first 1000 years people played jokes on each other, they sang, danced, told jokes and had fun. I'm not going to pull any practical jokes on you, but I do hope these few attempts at humor have lightened your spirits and maybe even

eased your anxiety over things that are happening in our country and in the world today. (SLIDE)

For some of you, this is the first time back inside our sanctuary since the pandemic began and I want you to feel safe and welcome. I'm so happy to see you! If we can feel this joyful after a few months of being apart, imagine the joy we'll experience when we're all reunited as one huge joyful family reunion when Jesus returns again. As the song by Mercy Me says, I Can Only Imagine what that day will be like. Until then, we have these small foreshadowing's of what's to come. We speak of Holy Communion, which we'll celebrate in a few minutes, as a foretaste of the feast to come. I believe it'll be so fabulous it literally will make us forget the pain and suffering of this world. After all we have the promise of Jesus that when we finally arrive at the home of our heavenly father, there will be no more pain and no more suffering. In fact, God himself will wipe away our tears and when God wipes tears away, they're gone, forever!

On this easter morning 2000 or so years ago, the women went to the tomb where Jesus was buried. They were intending to do the normal things ancient women did after someone died. They were going to anoint the body with spices and oils because decaying bodies tended to give off odors that would make most people stay away. They wanted the body of Jesus to stay sweet smelling so his followers could come and see for themselves how the Romans and the Religious

Leaders had killed their Messiah. It seems like God wasn't just playing a practical joke on the devil here. First, God chose women to be the first ones to discover the empty tomb and God had to send two of his messengers to explain why Jesus wasn't there. The angels had to ask the women why they're looking for the living among the dead. Even though Jesus had spoken very plainly about rising from the dead, until you witness it for yourself it's something too fantastic and supernatural to believe. Death is like some cruel joke, but death is a cruel joke no more! Not since those women found the tomb to be empty. Of course, the testimony of women in ancient times wasn't considered credible, so Peter had to run to the tomb to see for himself. What he saw amazed him.

Our Gospel text for this Easter Sunday ends there, but we know the rest of the story. The resurrection of Jesus changed not only Peter, but all Jesus' disciples. Peter turned from being a brash, speak and act before you think kind of guy, into one of the great Apostles and Fathers of the Church. All the other disciples were also transformed from being so afraid for their own lives that they hid in the upper room for fear of the Jews and the Romans, into bold doers and proclaimers of the Gospel-Good News of Jesus Christ. This small band of 12 Apostles plus one player to be named later, the Apostle Paul, spread the Gospel to the entire known world. They all faced death at the hands of the Romans, except John, the one the Bible says was the disciple Jesus loved. John was exiled and spent his old age

isolated from his congregation and all the people he loved, on an island with murderers and other violent felons who were so bad they had to be exiled from the rest of the world.

The opponents of Jesus tried to stop the spread of the news of Jesus resurrection by spreading the rumor that his body was stolen away during the night. I imagine other rumors floated around as well. Maybe Jesus had bribed Pilate to take his body down from the cross before he had actually died, or maybe someone had given Jesus a potion that only made him seem to be dead, but he was really just in a coma. None of those false rumors could have produced the transformation in the disciples that turned them into super Christian preachers and heroic evangelists who converted so many in the early church. What could have transformed them in the face of rejection and persecution from scaredy cats into heroes of the Bible? They had seen the risen Christ and had touched the nail holes in his hands and seen his wounded side. They even ate with him. No ghost can do that! Once seeing the risen Christ, they knew his promises were real. We have the gift of the Holy Spirit who imparts faith into us, but those first apostles only had their own eyewitness testimony. We believe and trust in the resurrection because God gives us the Holy Spirit and along with the Holy Spirit comes the gift of faith.

By the way, I hope if I ever encounter an angel of God in person, he or she doesn't ask me why I'm seeking the living among the dead... I mean how

embarrassing would that be. I think I can tell the difference between the living and the dead... But is that so easy? I'm reminded of an old song that said I'm Looking for Love in all the wrong places... I wonder how many of us are looking for Jesus, or salvation, or love, in all the wrong places... Jesus told us where to find him. I can think of four places off the top of my head... He said he would be present where two or more gather in his name. He said when you help out the least of these our brothers and sisters, we do it to him. He said this is my Body and this is my Blood in the meal we call Holy Communion. If you are looking for Jesus, you will find him in each and every book of the Bible. They all point to Him. If you're seeking joy or happiness or fulfillment in this life I suggest to seek Jesus where he can be found and the rest will take care of itself.

One thing Jesus said that wouldn't change, even during this past year of virus, sickness, and death. He said that God so loved the world that he gave his only son, not to condemn us, but to save us. That plan of God is what Jesus accomplished by his death and resurrection. He showed us just how much God loves us. And that my friends, is no joking matter.

May God's love fill you and your home this day. May the empty tomb remind all of us not to look for Jesus among the dead, but look for Him in the faces and in the hearts of all those who are our neighbors. He is Risen! Amen!