“This is the day that the Lord has made,
let us rejoice and be glad in it.” AMEN!

You know what the problem is with Easter?

The problem is that it’s not like Christmas!

There’s not a build up of excitement in the weeks
prior to Easter like there is with Christmas.

We don’t have trees to decorate weeks in advance,
we don’t sing secular songs on the radio about
dreaming of a green Easter.

There aren’t any jolly ol’ bunnies that invite
you sit on their laps only to scare
the daylights out of kids. :-)

And another thing, Easter doesn't
have catchy phrases like,
“Keep ‘Christ’ in Christmas,”

those “important” things that get us all judgy
about other religions and
unites against consumerism.

Right?

We don’t go around saying,
“Keep the ‘ster’ in Easter!” (Pause)

But maybe, we should, be stirred, that is.

You see, today is the day when we speak
about things that happened long ago and
of things that are yet to come.

We speak of the way it was and the way it will be.

And in doing so, become stirred. (Pause)

A man told me once that when he was 9 years old
his father took him fishing.

The son was thrilled and the pond where
his dad took him seemed like the Atlantic Ocean.

After that day of fishing, he told me
that he wrote in his journal about
how wonderful the day was.

Then a few years later,
he was hurtfully disillusioned,
when the boy’s mother said how,

when they came home from that fishing trip,
the dad said the day was terrible.

Of course, the (then) preteen
was let down by those words.

How could he have had such a great time
and his father such a terrible one?

But then, years later he got lifted up again
because the (now grown) son realized that,
yes, fishing was not his dad's favorite thing,

and that although his dad did not have a great day,
he did everything possible to make sure
his son did.

And that remembering, that experience of
piecing things together, put him back up
on top of the world because he knew
how much his father loved him.

By remembering… he was stirred,
and that stirs us, too. (Pause)

In the movie, *Parenthood*, there's a scene where
Tod Higgins (played by Keanu Reeves)
becomes an unexpectedly positive
influence on Garry,

the withdrawn young son of Helen

(played by Dianne Wiest).

In the key scene, Tod helps Helen
by agreeing to talk to Garry, her son.

Mom and son were struggling to connect
because of puberty and other age
appropriate emotional trials.

Tod approached Garry with honesty and
a non-judgmental attitude.

They shared in open communication about
the awkwardness of puberty and
Tod reassured Garry that his feelings
and experiences were normal
for a boy his age.

The conversation gave Garry a sense of
relief and comfort, and led him to feel
less isolated and anxious about what
he’s going through.

Tod, despite being young, and
despite a seemingly immature character,
one whom Helen assumed was leading
her daughter away from pursuing college,
demonstrated empathy and
maturity.

We become stirred to find he not only helps Garry,
but also shares with Helen his own difficult
upbringing with an abusive father.

The engagement deepens Helen's respect for Tod
and helps her see him as a positive influence
in her family.

We, along with the characters of the movie,
are able then to see past what our eyes
first led us to believe. (Pause)

In Luke's account of the resurrection,
we find affirmation about how important
it is that we see past what our eyes tell us.

There's doubt and terror as the women go to
the tomb to finish preparing Jesus' body for
burial.

Our eyes tells us they find an open tomb and
no body of Jesus, but there are
two "lightning-clad" angels.

The angel asks, "Why do you look for the
living among the dead?"

This question is unique to Luke.

No other gospel has it.

“Why do you look for the
living among the dead?”

They went looking for a body to anoint for burial
and are now beginning to “see” something else.

They don’t “see” Jesus, there’s no
resurrection appearance here,
that will come next week.

What’s the good news? What’s the gospel?

The answer is
they remembered what Jesus had said.

That’s the gospel!

“They remembered his words.”

Notice it doesn’t say.

“Everything from then on, made sense!”

Nor does it say, “They came to know everything
about God, and lived the rest of their lives,
happily ever after.” (Pause)

If the Bible had such expressions as these,
then it would be a dead word.

Simply an idle tale, like the apostles thought.

Meaning, it would be simply a history of
what happened and no longer able
to change lives
in the present, for the better.

But this, siblings, is a living word.

Which means we open it, read and chew on the text
and remember what Jesus said.

Discuss it with one another in accordance
with our experiences and then find new things
and clearer understandings spring forth
about this God that’s willing to do what
Jesus did: Die for Love.

When we read the Bible,
Love is broadened,
not restrained.

Forgiveness is abundant,
not scarce.

We find that we are approached
by a Higher Power that reassures us, even in
our imperfections and this Lord
will dwell among us
to be sure we know how much
we are loved. (Pause)

“To encounter a living God,
embodied and active in the world,
requires that we face something
more than a happy ending.” (2X)

Easter is that “something more.”

We face being stirred by not pretending
that doubt washes over us sometimes.

We become moved when we are able to admit
that we are afraid sometimes
about things we cannot control.

Finally, to be stirred requires that
we face a love stronger than death, and
a love that is committed to lives lost
and witnesses disregarded. (Pause)

A few years ago, we took a trip to California
and visited an amazing sequoia forest.

Towering trees that lift higher than the eye can see!

The guide who was stationed there was talking
about the ways the roots of
the sequoia are very shallow.

It was surprising to hear that!

How could these gigantic trees stand up
over the years with only shallow roots?

Wouldn’t a thunderstorm or earthquake
topple them over like bowling pins?

The guide said, “Yes, they would,
but the sequoias interconnect their roots
and even their branches so that when
there is a fierce wind or an earthquake
they interlock and support each other.
That’s why they don’t fall.” (Pause)

What a lovely image to stir us this Easter
as we piece things together and find God’s
demonstrated love for humanity.

In this chaotic and unstable time and world.

Remembering what happened long ago
to the women first and then to Peter.

How we are stirred by it all and perhaps led
to connect our roots with one another
to interlock and support each other.

Finding God there all along,
and with God and one another,
we are being made ready
for what is to come.

AMEN!