

Isaiah 25:6-9

Mark 16:1-8

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

“A feast of rich food;
a feast of well-aged wines;
a feast of victory.” AMEN!

“This is the feast, of victory for our God, Alleluia!”

This is the day, this is the time, and
all tears are wiped away.

Disgrace is taken away.

We rejoice and are glad in
the salvation of God.

“Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain,
to set us free.”

With power, blessing, and wisdom
we kneel before the altar to hear
the familiar promise of the resurrection.

The realized hope that death has lost its sting...
and in it, we may wonder,

“what in the world
are we supposed
to do now?!?”

Right?

Which brings me to want to tell
you one of my legendary golfing stories.

It's about a golfer named George.

When George finally got home to his wife, he
knew he was in for it.

"George!" She scolded,

"You promised you'd be home at 4 o' clock and
look at the time!

It's almost 8 pm!"

George quickly protested,
"But honey, please hear what happened.

It's Fred, he died on the eighth green.
He just dropped over as he was about to putt."

George's wife exclaimed,
"Oh my goodness, that's terrible!"

"It really was, it was just awful!" George said.

"For the rest of the game,

it was hit the ball,
drag Fred, hit the ball,
drag Fred.” :-)

I know that’s bad, but
you have to laugh!

And laughter teaches us two things.

The first this is that it’s ok to
tell jokes on Easter Sunday because
we learn that God has the last laugh on
the devil because death is not the end.

The second thing is, Easter is absurd.

Look around and notice what is associated with today.

Bunnies, baskets, eggs, and chocolate.

I’m not an Easter scrooge,
I like all of those things...
especially the chocolate.

But it’s absurd to link those things measure up
with the true message of resurrection
on Easter Sunday.

Yes, spring time, new life, I get it.

But Easter is about a body
that somehow gets loose.

It's about a dead Jesus, that is gone
from the tomb and an angel who
made an amazing announcement.

And in Mark's gospel, nothing else was reported,
at least from the original writer.

The gospel ends the way we ended
it during the reading.

Everyone left terrified and not saying a single word.

Chapter 16 began with Mary Magdelene, and
Mary the mother of James
(who may have been Mary, Jesus' mother,
but we don't know for sure), and

Salome going to the tomb of Jesus
with spices to anoint him.

We hear a little of their conversation about how
the stone might be moved so
they'd get into the tomb.

We don't read that they had even

an ounce of hope to find anything
other than death.

Why else go to a tomb?

They'd seen Jesus die with their own eyes
and they knew they had a duty and
they gathered what they need to perform
the duty and they went to the tomb.

It's absurd logic, but what does make sense
is that people go to cemeteries,
to a columbarium, or to places of
nature where ashes may have
been spread because

it helps us to grieve in healthy ways.

When we go to these places,
we honor those whom we've loved (still love)
and we go there to show respect.

That was why those women went. (Pause)

My grandfather and my grandmother are buried
right up the road at Rose Lawn Cemetery.

I knew they were laid to rest there, but
I didn't know the exact location until

a couple years ago when my dad gave
me directions over the phone
to find them.

When I went, I didn't expect
to find anything but death.

I went to show respect and perform an act of love.

A few weeks later I went back,
with cleaning supplies (and our sons)
to give the headstones a good scrubbing.

We didn't go there thinking we'd
find anything except death, but we went
with a purpose and we carried things and
we showed respect and when we
were finished there...

I took a picture of their headstones and
I sent it to my dad.

Most of you know my father died in December of 2022.

And I'm so glad I did that because
he replied how important and
how moving that action was for him.

Something so little (at the time)

became for me something really, really, big.

We didn't go expecting to see anything but death.

We just went to perform a service.

The result was like Easter. (Pause)

You see, we can read the resurrection account in Mark,
or any of the gospels for that matter, and
look for proof.

We can read the way Mark ends and
try to intellectualize the event but
it cannot be done.

Believe me!

Many have tried and many will continue to try
to prove the resurrection of Jesus
beyond any doubt.

I say, "Have at it! Try!"

But in the end, no one can.

We just have to laugh and finally admit
it's impossible to prove.

But, just because it's impossible to prove
doesn't mean people are impossible to be moved
by Easter.

We are moved when we go to the tomb.
It helps somehow.

It moves us physically and emotionally and
we get the chance to hear a whisper...

"They are not here. They have been raised." (Pause)

So, this Easter let's remember to laugh and move...
and then get moving.

Do little things like cleaning tombstones or
very big things like caring for the dying,
the un-sheltered, the imprisoned, and
the hungry. (Pause)

We want to be the kind of people
who can laugh and be moved.

You may remember the names
Holland, Miep and Henrick Gies.

They were the ones who
went up hidden stairs to bring food and news
to Otto Frank and his family as

they hid from the Nazis
because they were Jewish.

Miep Gies was the one who
baked Anne Frank a holiday cake and
gave her her first and only
pair of heeled shoes.

It was she, who in the end
saved Anne's soon-to-be famous diary.

Miep insisted in an interview later that
she and her friends were just
ordinary Dutch people.

She called herself ordinary,
but the kind that resisted.

The kind that was moved to do the right thing. (Pause)

The angel in the empty tomb said it,
and the women heard it and
they fled as terror and amazement
seized them.

They fled from that place of death and
said nothing to nobody.

Now, none of that is absurd because
it would have scared
the daylights out of me, too.

And I'm a pastor for God's sake!

Yet, what is absurd is for us to think
that they stayed silent for long.

No way!

Thank God for women who speak and proclaim
and testify and are bold in duty.

Thank God for women who are moved to move.

They were the first ones, in every gospel,
to learn that God can raise the dead.

With laughter and absurdity, Jesus goes on
ahead of us so that wherever life takes us,
Jesus is already there.

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

AMEN!