



“April Fools”

The Resurrection of Our Lord
8:00, 9:30, and 11:00 a.m.
Contemporary Services
Sunday, April 1, 2018
The Reverend John H. Brock
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

John 20:1-18

Grace to you and peace, from God who is, who was, and who is to come. Amen.

This is April's 1st, also known as April Fool's day. Are you doing any pranks? Pastor Horner told me that he purchased plastic eggs for the Children's Sermon for Traditional worship and filled them with broccoli. He also told me is going to put hot sauce in the marshmallow peeps, so if he offers you anything today, *Don't Accept It!*

Since 1700, Easter has fallen on April 1 only 11 times, which makes it 3.5% for 318 years. The last time Easter fell on April 1st was 62 years ago, in 1956. It will happen two more time in this century: 2029 & 2040. Then, not for another 68 years: 2108.

I like a good April Fool's story. Just a few years ago I heard a piece on NPR on how some historians were desperately trying to interview the surviving WW2 . . . *Dolphins*. These dolphins had been trained during the war to place magnetic bombs on the hulls of enemy ships. The “historian” being interviewed talked about how the dolphins had amazing stories to tell about swimming in enemy waters, avoiding detection, and things like that. Then there was a clip of a dolphin chirping for several seconds, and the historian came back on and said, “Of course, we have no idea what they're saying, because no one can understand them.”

During my first call, when we lived in Northumberland county, ***I*** was guilty of falling for an article in the *Sunbury Daily Item* newspaper. The article talked about how Montour county, the smallest county in PA, was going to merge with Columbia county, for cost saving measures, among other reasons. The article then went on to poke fun at then governor Tom Ridge by “quoting” him as saying: “I didn't even know we *had* a Montour county.”

One of the best that I have heard was the story from the BBC, with their report on *The Spaghetti Harvest* of 1957. This supposedly took place in Switzerland. The three-minute film told of how the “farmers” had worked for years in order to produce spaghetti that was always the same length. They harvested their crop every year, and then the community would celebrate the harvest. The piece was **so** convincing, that people from all over the UK called into the BBC to find out where they could purchase their own spaghetti tree.

Today, however, is Easter. This is a high, holy day in Christianity. We celebrate with special music and decorations. You probably have your own celebrations, I'm sure. Maybe you'll

have brunch. Or you got a new outfit. You might have family gatherings.

In John's gospel, though, this one week, Palm Sunday through Easter, takes up nearly 40% of the book: 9 chapters out of 21. Yet this major Holy day is barely mentioned in secular history. This is what we get from Josephus, a Roman/Jewish historian from the first century:

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.

Antiquities of the Jews, Book 18, Chapter 3

If we really think about it, though, the Easter story is kind of funny, a bit odd, even. Seven days ago, we were celebrating Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and then we moved to his arrest and rigged trial on Thursday; his execution and burial on Friday, and a day of mourning on Saturday.

Yet here we are: Easter Morning, April's Fools Day! Jesus pulls off the greatest joke in history - a true April's Fools gag. We celebrate Easter as a day of joy and laughter, and the devil is the brunt of the joke.

So, what is it that makes a joke funny? I think it's the kick of the discovery, which first leads us one way, then suddenly shifts our perspective. Here's an example:

For Pastor Johnson's 60th birthday, the congregation at St Paul's, decided to give him a present of a new suit. He was so moved by the gift that the following Sunday he stood before everyone and began his sermon with a tear in his eye, 'Today I am preaching to you in my birthday suit

That shift in perspective, *that's* what makes a good joke. Hopefully, you don't see the punch line coming.

That shift in perspective is what happened to Mary, that Sunday morning, there by the tomb. She did **not** recognize Jesus, even though he was standing right there in front of her. She did not recognize him, even when he speaks to her, when he asks her: "Why are you weeping?" It's *only* when he calls her name, when he delivers the punch line, that Bam! Jesus shifts her perceptible.

Mary **was** a confused, sad disciple. And then her perception shifts. When she realizes that Jesus is **not** dead, that her Lord, her friend, her savior, **is** alive, her perception shifts **from** being a weeping, depressed, follower of a dead teacher, **to** a Bold Proclaimer of a risen, alive Lord.

This perception change can happen to us as well. Because of the resurrection, our perception shifts, it changes. For those who feel they do not have worth; for those who feel abandoned, that they are not loved; for those who are not sure of what they believe; the power of God comes into their life, into **our** lives, to shift our perspective, to tell us we **do**

have worth, we are **not** abandoned, and that we are **most definitely** loved.

On *this* April 1st, on *this* April Fool's day, let's celebrate the joke that Jesus pulled on sin and death and the devil. Let's remember what this day is about: Resurrection and Transformation. For 2,000 years, the resurrection has transformed lives, given hope to those who have lost hope.

Jesus started the joke on death and the devil on Friday. But *today*, on *this* Easter, we celebrate the last, **best, joyous** laugh of all: Christ Is Risen!

He Is Risen, Indeed!

Amen.

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