



“April Fools”

The Resurrection of Our Lord
8:00, 9:30, and 11:00 a.m.
Traditional Services
Sunday, April 1, 2018
The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Isaiah 25:6-9; John 20:1-18

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Well I only have a three-minute sermon for you today. APRIL FOOLS!!! Easter has only fallen on April 1st eleven times since the 1700's. So today is a special day and we should make the most of it. I certainly have, I began my day by putting mustard in the chocolate rabbit, hot sauce in the marshmallow peep, and broccoli in the plastic Easter eggs. It's good for you.

There have been a lot of great April fools' gags. One of the most famous ones actually comes from the 1950's. The BBC decided to do a short news documentary in which they interviewed Swiss farmers picking freshly grown spaghetti. It was called the Great Spaghetti Harvest. And after it aired the next day the BBC was flooded with requests of where could you find these Spaghetti Trees and exactly how did one care for them? You can actually find it on You Tube, it's hilarious.

Well today is Easter. A high holy day in the life of the church. It is filled with special music, decorations, Easter eggs, Easter baskets, perhaps you'll have brunch or maybe a family gathering. And if you really think about it the Easter Story is kind of funny.

Now the last days of Jesus life actually make up 40% of the Gospel of John's three-year story. The resurrection itself is barely mentioned in history. Now one of the historians that we do have is the Jewish Roman Historian Josephus, who 61 years after the resurrection of Jesus wrote this:

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 condemned him to a cross, and those who had come first to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day fully restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.

I like that name for the church, The Tribe of Christians.

Three days ago, we basically had a funeral. It began a little bit earlier on Palm Sunday, with a joyful entry into Jerusalem, there was Thursday's meal and betrayal by Judas, Friday's trial and execution and burial of Jesus. We heard all of the enemies of God, all of the forces of evil were aligned to destroy the Savior.

And then it's Easter morning, April Fools Day and Jesus pulls off the greatest prank in history, and it's the devil who is the brunt of the joke. The devil had thought that he had won the cosmic battle between good and evil, Jesus finally was dead. But it was not to be so.

The early church fathers often made the link between Easter and God's prank on the devil, including a very famous Easter sermon by John Chrysostom around 400 A.D., who describes a vision of Christ confronting the devil and laughing at him.

What is it after all that makes a joke funny? Well believe it or not social scientists have actually researched this. And they say that the key to a good joke is in the kick of discovery. In other words, a good joke leads us one way and then quickly pivots and takes us another way suddenly shifting our perspective. So, what do you say, let's try it out with a joke...

For Pastor Johnson's 60th birthday, the congregation at St Paul's Lutheran Church, decided to give him a present of a brand new black 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 and said, 'Today I am preaching in my birthday suit.' See how it works?

Shifting our perspective, and the first Easter morning certainly Mary Magdalene had her perception shifted. She didn't recognize Jesus, even though he was standing right there in front of her. And Jesus asked, "Why are you weeping? Who are you looking for?"

And then he mentions her name. "Mary", he says and then Bam! She recognizes the Lord. Jesus gives her a new perception. Mary after all had just been seconds before a confused and sad disciple. And then with this change in her life she becomes a Bold Proclaimer and the first evangelist of the church announcing the resurrection of Jesus to the disciples and the world! This perception change can happen to us as well, because of the resurrection of Jesus, our perception changes.

For those who are feeling abandoned today, Jesus offers a family, called the church. For those who feel unloved or overwhelmed, Jesus offers peace. For those who are angry, Jesus gives love and contentment. For those who are feeling resentment, Jesus forgives, for those not sure what they believe, Jesus offers resurrection faith.

When the world seems to be moving to a deeper sense of skepticism, violence and destruction, Jesus the risen Christ defeats the forces of death and comes to us as the Prince of Life and Peace.

When we think that we can't change, or that we're simply stuck with the person that we are, then Jesus rises from the dead, to transform, to comfort, and to save. And we

are changed in the twinkling of the eye by the knowledge of Christ life, death and resurrection.

And so is the church on this Easter April Fools day we celebrate and rejoice! We celebrate the joke that Jesus pulled on sin, death, and the devil. The divine joke that saves us. And as people of the Resurrection, we're called to usher in hope where there is despair, light where there is darkness, and joy where there is sorrow.

In life and death, it is God who has the last word and the last laugh. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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