

One More Time
Romans 12: 1-3; Luke 6:21; 1 Corinthians 15:17
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Some of us remember Singles Ads, right? Back when everything was in print, and before Match.com, you would find ads at the back of a newspaper or journal, something like: SWM, (Single White Male), seeking traveling friend, and then there would be a personalized description. Here's one of my favorites that appeared in a local paper years ago:

"**SBF**" (single, black, female) Seeks male companionship. Age and ethnicity unimportant. I'm a young, svelte, good looking girl who LOVES to play. I like long walks in the woods, riding in your pickup truck, fishing and camping trips. I love cozy winter nights lying by the fire. Candlelight dinners will have me eating out of your hand. Rub me the right way and watch me respond. I'll be at the front door when you get home from work, wearing only what nature gave me. Kiss me and I'm yours." Call 555-2525 and ask for Daisy.

The phone number was the SPCA, and Daisy was a two-year old black Labrador retriever. They got 643 calls in two days.

Sometimes things aren't quite what they appear; sometimes things surprise us. Sometimes things take a twist we never anticipated; sometimes the story unfolds in a way we could not have imagined.

Which is why I've always loved Holy Humor Sunday. Because it invites you and me to savor – to linger with – the incredulity of what took place that first Easter morning. To revel – to dwell – in the greatest surprise in the universe, when the powers of earth killed Jesus, locked him in a tomb, and thought it was finished.

SURPRISE!!! God had done a lot of amazing things in history, but no one had ever, ever, imagined resurrection!

It's funny, but in some circles this Sunday is known as "**low Sunday**." I always thought I knew what that meant. Google that, and you'll find out that the origin of that nickname has to do with the difference between all the high, holy ritual of Easter Sunday, compared to reduced pomp and circumstance of the Sunday following. For 42 years I always thought the nickname Low Sunday simply had to do with the difference in attendance between last Sunday and this one!

In most multiple-staff congregations, the head of staff rarely preaches the Sunday after Easter – give it to an associate pastor and take a rest. That's never been my attitude, because ALL my colleagues poured themselves into Holy Week services Wednesday,

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and even sunrise on Easter morning. Truth be told, I mostly like to preach this day because I want to keep the celebration going!

As colleague, Vince Amlin, writes in a morning devotional. "Easter, like Lent, is supposed to be a season. Fifty days – **fifty days** – stretching to Pentecost. Seven full weeks of celebration, resurrection, and joy. It's a season called **Eastertide**. Don't feel bad if you didn't know – most people don't.

Many of us observe 40 days of solemn introspection at Lent. We give things up. We start in ashes; we remember we are dust. We bury our hallelujahs and end in somber darkness. Then, for one glorious morning, it's lilies and trumpets and candy-filled plastic eggs; 40 parts Lent to 1 part Easter.

That's the wrong recipe. The original calls for 50 parts Easter! Fifty times as many rolled away stones! Fifty times as many empty tombs! Fifty times as much death-defeating love! 50 times the joy. 50 times the celebration. Imagine the difference. In your life. In your church. In our world. The balance too often is off. It's time to change recipes from 40 parts Lent to 1 Easter, and enjoy all 50 days of Eastertide. Welcome to Eastertide."¹

Perhaps if we in the church overflowed with joy for days on end, the common perceptions of Christians wouldn't be "judgmental, hypocritical, sour-faced; rigid; and just plain "no fun!"

I love our text from Luke – blessed are you who weep now; for you will laugh. Jesus knew what was coming; knew what was promised. Knew the final outcome. Not death and despair, but joy and laughter.

Speaking of laughter, friends are now sending me aging and retirement jokes.

Like the one about the retired couple, sitting together on the sofa at home, getting cuddly; she takes off her glasses & moves closer.

He says: "Sweetie, **without your glasses**, you still look like that beautiful young lady I married."

She says: "Well, Honey, without my glasses, you still look pretty good too!"

We would all do well to laugh at ourselves a bit. **Humility is a virtue** – and it should be one of the ones Christians abound in. We know we're sinners. We know we're not perfect. We know we miss the mark. We know better than to be too puffed up about ourselves.

In fact, that's why I chose our **text from Romans**. "Do not think more highly about yourself than you ought; rather, have a sober estimate of yourself. " In other words, don't take yourself too seriously.

That's why one of the **great blessings of the craziness of the season** of the last two years – staring at cameras, trying to continue with worship and preach to an empty Sanctuary, inserting video clips and all the rest – it was such a blessing when Lynn reminded us regularly not to get too uptight about worship. (***Watch this bloopers video***)

That's why I've always loved the fact that in DaVinci's painting of the last supper, there's an overturned container of salt on the table. OOPS, at the Last Supper!! Really??!! We can get so uptight about communion. Yes, communion can be a solemn meal. But it is also to be for us a symbol of a great, boisterous, joyful feast in the kingdom of heaven. Equated with a great wedding banquet, where joy and laughter rule the day.

Let me read the gathering thought from your bulletin cover: Those who live in grace are freed from the necessity of taking themselves, their circumstances, their morality and opinions, their piety and beliefs, too seriously. They are free to laugh and play as children of God. As important as repentance is, we are not saved by our much weeping, any more than we are saved by acts of penitence. And the expression of salvation freely given and received is not weeping but laughter, or at least a weeping become laughter. Laughter and lightheartedness, at their fullest and freest, are the gift of divine grace."²

I started this message with the idea things aren't always what they seem to be. That reminds me of my friend the doctor, who told me this one:

As the manager of his hospital's softball team, he was responsible for returning equipment to the proper owners at the end of the season.

When he walked into the surgery department carrying a bat that belonged to one of the surgeons, he passed several patients and their families in a waiting area.

"Look, honey," one woman said to her husband. "Here comes your anesthesiologist."

Things were not as they seemed that Easter morning. They had not stolen the body. Christ had been raised. And that's why we rejoice this day and why I commend to you be joyful every day. For as Paul says, "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Friends – Christ is Risen. He is Risen Indeed! Hallelujah, amen.

1. Vince Amlin, "*Hallelujah Is Forever*," Still Speaking Devotional, April 18, 2022.
2. Conrad Hyers, *Holy laughter: Essays on Religion in the Comic Perspective* (Seabury Press, 1969).