

**April 20, 2025 – Easter Sunday**  
**Luke 24:1–12**  
**“Easter Laugh”**

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An Alberta man left the snowy streets of Calgary for a vacation in Florida. His wife, away on a business trip, planned to meet him there the next day.

Once he arrived at his hotel, he decided to send her a quick email. Unable to find the scrap of paper with her address, he did his best to type it from memory.

Unfortunately, he got one letter wrong. The email ended up in the inbox of an elderly preacher’s wife—whose husband had just passed away the day before.

When she opened the email, she let out a scream and collapsed. Her family rushed in to find this message on the screen:

“Dearest Wife,  
Just checked in. Everything’s prepared for your arrival tomorrow.  
P.S. Sure is hot down here!”

It could happen to any of us, right?  
Honestly, I could see myself doing that.  
It’s sad... but it makes us laugh.

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There was a time in the church when laughter like this was actually *encouraged*. In fact, some early Christian traditions celebrated something called **Risus Paschalis**—Latin for “Easter Laugh.”

The idea was that on Easter, God pulled off the biggest joke in history: The devil thought he’d won when Jesus died on the cross— but God raised him on the third day.

**The grave didn’t get the last word. God did.**

This tradition began in the 13th century and lasted until Pope Clement X eventually suppressed it. Maybe the clergy were just too funny for their own good.

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But why all this talk of humor today?  
Because those first people at the tomb weren't laughing.

They were mourning—grieving the loss of a friend, a teacher, a son.  
And when they saw the stone rolled away and the tomb empty, they were stunned.  
What could it mean?

**Here's the punchline they forgot: God had the last laugh. God raised Jesus.**

Two men in dazzling clothes said to the women:

“Why do you look for the living among the dead?  
He is not here; he has risen.  
Remember how he told you... that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners,  
be crucified, and on the third day rise again.” (Luke 24:5–7)

But the women didn't get it.

They went to tell the disciples—still confused.  
The disciples thought it was nonsense.  
Peter ran to the tomb, saw the linen cloths, and left amazed...  
but even he didn't fully understand.

In Mark's gospel, the women *flee in fear*.  
They don't say, “Just like he said!”  
**They forgot the punchline.**

In Matthew, it's only when the *risen Jesus* appears that Mary Magdalene and the other Mary fall  
at his feet and worship him.  
**They get it. God wins.**

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And *this*, I believe, is why laughter belongs in church today.

Jesus' resurrection—this world-altering, soul-saving, death-defeating miracle—  
**gives us permission to laugh.**

Not because the world isn't hard—  
but because the *worst thing* isn't the *last thing*.

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There's plenty to take seriously.  
We all carry our own lists of darkness and pain.

I just heard that a friend of mine has learned his prostate cancer has spread—  
to his brain, to his bones.  
The weight of the world is on him.  
He's despairing.

What do I say to him?  
What do we say to *anyone* facing darkness today?

We say:

**The tomb was empty. God got the last laugh.**

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Because of that, we can dare to laugh—even *here*.  
Maybe it's something deep inside us, part of how God made us.

Preacher Will Willimon once said:

“Among all God’s creatures, human beings are the only animals who both laugh and weep—  
for we are the only animals struck by the difference between the way things are and the way  
things ought to be.”

We *know* things aren't as they should be.  
But we also *know* what God has done.

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It reminds me of another story:

A pastor's family was invited to Easter dinner at the Wilsons' house.  
Mrs. Wilson was famous for her cooking—legendary at church potlucks.

As the food was served, little Peter, the pastor's youngest son, started eating right away.

“Peter, wait until we say grace,” said his embarrassed father.

“You have to pray,” his mom added. “We *always* pray before meals at our house.”

Peter looked up and said:

**“That's *at* our house. This is Mrs. Wilson's house—and she *knows* how to cook.”**

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This Easter morning, the punchline rings loud and clear:

**Christ is risen.**

And because of that, we are free—free to live with joy,  
and even to laugh.

God's victory over death is *too good* to keep to ourselves.  
Let God's grace shape your life—and pass it on.  
Let others in on the joke.

Because it's not funny if it stays a secret.

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Annie Johnson Flint wrote these words, and I'll leave them with you:

“Some of us stay at the cross,  
Some of us wait at the tomb,  
Quickened and raised with Christ  
Yet lingering still in the gloom.  
But the way of the cross leads on,  
To victorious grace in the heavenly place,  
Where the risen Lord has gone.”

**Amen.**