

Sermons at
First Lutheran Church (ELCA)
Reggie Denton, Pastor

John 20:19-31
April 24, 2022 (2nd Sunday of Easter)

Do you feel a little discombobulated? Imagine how the DISCIPLES felt? Out of sorts, inside, outside, upside down! Jesus was dead and in the tomb. And now they've JUST heard from Mary Magdalene that he's ALIVE. They didn't know WHAT to think. They didn't understand what was going on or WHY it was happening. They'd LOCKED themselves in the upper room.

This service is DESIGNED to give you a sense of how THEY felt that first Easter. Everything is all backwards and upside down. Maybe you've sort of locked YOURSELF up too.

But LOCKED DOORS can't keep JESUS out. "Jesus came and stood among them," it SAYS, "and the disciples REJOICED when they saw the Lord."

You see, JOY is what the CHURCH is supposed to LOOK like. You see it again and again in scripture. Jesus loves a good PARTY! He performed His first miracle at a wedding reception in Cana, turning water into wine. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus tells us that the overjoyed father threw a big party for his returning son. "We are going to have a feast, a celebration," the father declared, "because this son of mine was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found" (Luke 15:23-24).

I think that's one of the reasons the church grew so FAST in those first few centuries. The church was a JOYFUL place, and people wanted to be PART of a community like that.

Joy brings LAUGHTER, especially when it follows the RELEASE of a BURDEN. Ecc 3(:4) says, "There is a time to weep AND a time to laugh, a time to mourn AND a time to dance." Jesus said, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you WILL laugh" (Luke 6:21). So, considering the LOSS the DISCIPLES had experienced, I imagine there was A LOT of laughter in that upper room after Jesus appeared to them.

So today we celebrate Holy Humor Sunday. Jesus has the last laugh over death, so today we're going to SHARE some laughter – at least I HOPE so. Church members have been sending me your favorite jokes for YEARS, and today I want to share some of them with YOU.

These are the best PREACHER jokes, at least the best APPROPRIATE ones. I know you will be good Lutherans and smile as loudly as you can.

A new pastor moved into town and went out one Saturday to visit his parishioners. All went well until he came to one house. It was obvious that someone was home, but no one came to the door even after he had knocked several times. Finally, he took out his card, wrote on the back "Revelation 3:20" and stuck it in the door.

The next day he found his card in the collection plate. Below his message was the notation: "Genesis 3:10."

The pastor had a good laugh. Revelation 3:20 reads: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with me." The response from Genesis 3:10 reads: "I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked."

This is a true story about a pastor. He had a kitten that climbed up a tree in his backyard and then was afraid to come down. The pastor coaxed, offered warm milk, etc. The kitty would not come down.

The tree wasn't sturdy enough to climb, so the pastor decided that if he tied a rope to his car and pulled away, so that the tree bent down, he could reach up and get the kitten. And that's what he

did, but just as the tree was bent low enough to reach the kitten, the rope broke. The tree went "boing!" and the kitten instantly sailed through the air – out of sight.

The pastor felt terrible. He walked all over the neighborhood asking people if they'd seen a little kitten. Nope. Nobody had seen a stray kitten. So he prayed, "Lord, I just commit this kitten to your keeping," and went on about his business.

A few days later he was at the grocery store, and met one of his church members. He happened to look into her shopping cart and was amazed to see cat food. This woman couldn't stand cats, and everyone knew it, so he asked her, "Why are you buying cat food when you hate cats so much?"

She replied, "You won't believe this, pastor, I watched my little girl go out in the yard, get on her knees, and ask God for a cat. And really, I saw it with my own eyes, a kitten suddenly came flying out of the blue sky, and landed right in front of her"

Sometimes things don't go as well as they should in the church.

One Sunday morning a mother went in to wake her son and tell him it was time to get ready for church, to which he replied, "I'm not going."

"Well of course you're going," she said. "Now get out of bed and get dressed."

"I don't want to go to church," he said.

'Why not?' she asked.

"Because they don't like me there and they're mean to me."

His mother replied, "Well, I don't care. You HAVE to go to church. You're the PASTOR!"

One of the favorite things of most pastors is when we can get together with other pastors, regardless of what denomination they're from. But sometimes people don't get our humor.

A pastor and a priest from local churches stood by the side of the road, pounding a sign into the ground that read:

"The End is Near...Turn Around Now, Before It's Too Late!!"

As a car sped past them, the driver yelled, "Leave us alone, you religious nuts!"

From around the curve, they heard screeching tires and a big splash.

The pastor turned to the priest and asked, "Do you think the sign should just say, 'Bridge Out'?"

Stewardship is always a concern for pastors.

A fellow came to a church and spoke to the pastor. The Man asked if he could have a funeral for his cherished pet – a dog.

The pastor said, "I'm sorry, we don't have funerals for dogs."

The man shrugged and said, "Well, that a shame because I'd donate \$10,000 to the church that would help me out."

With a big smile, the pastor exclaimed, "You didn't tell me the dog was LUTHERAN!"

But one of the most important skills for a pastor is how well they preach.

A taxi driver and a minister arrived in heaven at the same time. The taxi driver was to be led to a palatial suite, and the minister was given a small room. "I don't get it," the minister said. "He drove a cab; I was in the ministry for decades."

"Up here, we go by results," said St. Peter. "While you preached, people slept. While he drove, people prayed."

“There will be a meeting of the Board immediately after the service,” the pastor said during the announcements. When the service ended, the Church Board gathered at the back of the sanctuary for the meeting. But there was a stranger among them – a visitor who had never attended the church before.

“My friend,” said the pastor, “maybe you didn’t understand what I said. This is a meeting of the Board.”

“Yes,” said the visitor, “and after today’s sermon I suppose I’m about as bored as everyone who came to this meeting.”

A woman named Gladys Dunn moved into a retirement community.

One beautiful Sunday morning she walked down the street to a church not far from her apartment. Gladys was in awe of the big beautiful church building as she stepped inside, but she wasn’t too impressed with the sermon. She thought it was kind of boring and, as she looked around the church, she noticed that many of the members were nodding off.

When the preacher finished his sermon he encouraged the congregation to greet those sitting close by. Gladys turned toward the man sitting on her left. He, too, had fallen asleep and was yawning and stretching trying to wake up.

She politely offered her hand and said, "I'm Gladys Dunn."

The man replied, "I'm glad he's done too!"

And I’ll bet you’re glad I’m done. But don’t stop laughing. It’s a gift from God. This is a celebration. Amen.