

“So That Our Joy is Complete!”

John 15: 1-11

Right from the start, I want everyone to know that this was my idea. Don't blame the worship team. Don't blame the staff. I take full responsibility for this crazy idea of Holy Humor Sunday. I thought we all could use a little laughter, a little joy, a little humor today to remind us once again of the importance, the significance the empty tomb has on our lives. The empty tomb is God's way of having the last laugh! Easter is the celebration of life. Easter is the celebration of darkness not overcoming the light. Easter is the celebration of joy!

You're probably wondering where I got this idea for Holy Humor Sunday. I heard about it from a friend last year. She talked about how everyone in her particular congregation looks forward to this Sunday and they really get into it. The choir sings parodies. The children throw a party. There are practical jokes played on pastor, please don't get any ideas for next year though. As she was telling me about her church's celebration of Holy Humor Sunday, I couldn't help but think it sounded great and I wanted to try it here!

When I asked her how the idea for Holy Humor Sunday all got started at her church, she simply shared that it always seemed that the Sunday after Easter was

always so depressing. The crowds are a little smaller. The kids aren't hopped up on the sugar. The special music is put away for the Season. My friend shared that someone made a comment to her that by the second Sunday of Easter, it seems we as people of faith have forgotten our joy and we have all gone back to business as usual.

Let me say that again: It seems that we as people of faith have forgotten our joy and we have all gone back to business as usual. Because as you know, life doesn't stop on the Monday after Easter. The phone still rings. Bills still need to be paid. The news of hurt and hate that fills our world somehow still makes its way into our homes. Life doesn't stop because of the Empty Tomb. However that doesn't mean life should take away our Easter joy!

People of God, that is exactly what Easter tells us, shows us that we are not supposed to do. The Empty Tomb flipped our world upside down. God continues to surprise us in large and small ways. God continues to bring about the Kingdom of God here on earth for all of God's people. God is continuing to work in this world to bring healing and wholeness.

So, I'm here to tell you, that from now on, there is no way, no way we can or should ever go back to business as usual as people of faith.

Because you see, business as usual means that we sit back passively while God's creation continues to be used and abused. Business as usual means that we as people of faith let the powers that be silence us and stop the healing and wholeness the good news brings. Because business as usual means that we as people of faith forget the transforming, life giving, life changing power of God's love and God's grace.

And let me tell you, that's not going to happen. We've seen the Empty Tomb. We've experienced the power of the resurrection. We have seen the Risen Lord. We have heard God's laughter and experienced God's delight. There is no way, no way we can ever go back to business as usual.

The Kingdom of God is here, in our midst, bringing healing and wholeness for all of God's people. It is bringing life and laughter. It is bringing hope and grace. And more importantly it is bringing the peace that passes all understanding.

So my friends, now is not the time to go back to business as usual.

Now is the time for Joy! Now is the time for laughter! Now is the time for hope!
Now is the time for grace! Now is the time for love to take root in our hearts and
being to change and transform the world, to change and transform us into the
people God calls us to be, into the people God created us to be.

You see, we Christians, have a reputation for being pretty serious, for being pretty negative, for being pretty stern people. People know us more for what we are against than what we are for or for how we celebrate and share our joy.

I don't think Jesus told his disciples that people would know them by what they were against. If I remember right, Jesus told his disciples that people would know them by their love, the same love that was shown to them by God when God first named them and claimed them as God's own beloved children.

Jesus told his disciples to love one another just as God had loved them. Jesus told his disciples that if they abide in him, he will abide in them. Jesus told his disciples that if they abide in God's love, then Jesus' joy would be in them, and their joy would be complete.

If they knew God's love, then their joy would be complete.

And the same holds true for us. If we know God's love, if we have experienced God's love in our lives, then surely, there is joy, so much joy that we cannot and will not contain it. We will shout it from the mountain tops! We will smile and share the light of God. We will celebrate and never ever go back to business as usual.

We are called to be joyful people, celebrating always that light and love will overcome the darkness.

Now please don't hear me say that as Christians, as people of faith, we are to wander around with a fake smile plastered on our face, gritting our teeth while we grumble. We aren't supposed to be unrealistically cheerful, pretending sunshine and rainbows coming out of our ears.

We are called to be joyful people, shining the light of Christ, bringing healing and wholeness to all of God's creation for one simple reason. We abide in God's love always. We know something this world does not understand, we've experienced something that this world just does not get. We've experienced the power, the life of the resurrection. We've experienced God's love. That's what makes our joy complete. That's what brings us hope. We know that no matter what life brings our way, the good, the bad, the ugly, the breath-takingly beautiful, God is there, guiding us, leading us. God is there, loving us, showing us grace. God is there, welcoming us home. And nothing, nothing, nothing will ever separate us from God and God's love.

This is our story. This is the story that brings us new life. This is the story that changed our lives and gives us hope. And it is the same story that people of faith have been sharing, have been telling since the beginning of time. Throughout

the whole Bible, there is incident after incident of joy among the people of God. Each and every time God created, interacted, saved, healed, made whole, brought back to life, called and fed, each and every time God was with and among the people of God, there was joy! There was celebration. There was love, grace and hope.

Because the people of God knew that once they had experienced God's love, experienced God's grace, once they had experienced the joy of being claimed and named as one of God's own, that they could never ever go back to business as usual. They had been changed. They had been transformed. They had experienced the life giving power of God's love. Their joy was now complete!

And today, our joy is complete! Darkness did not and will not overtake the light. And nothing, nothing, nothing will ever separate us from God's love.

God's love abides in us. Our joy is complete. Thanks be to God. Amen.