

**I thought we ought to begin our reflection with a kind of Easter funny. A man had taken his whole extended family to visit the Holy Land. While in Jerusalem his mother-in-law dropped dead of a heart attack. Not knowing quite what to do, the man went to the American consulate for guidance. The officer at the desk explained to him, “Well, you’re in luck. Since your mother-in-law was Jewish, she can be buried here in Jerusalem for only \$100.00. To ship the body home will cost you over \$5,000.00.” The man thought about it for a moment and said, “No, we’ll take her home to be buried. The consular officer said, “Man, you must really love your mother-in-law.” The man said, “It isn’t that. It’s just that I heard there was a fellow once buried here and he came back to life. I don’t want to take that chance with my mother-in-law.”**

**Church, it’s time to shout! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA! We have a RISEN SAVIOR! ALLELUIA! HIS NAME IS JESUS! ALLELUIA!**

**The Church is filled with the scent of beautiful, spring flowers! The choir is in great voice! The Church is filled today with lots of folks we haven’t seen since Christmas. WELCOME! WE’RE GLAD YOU’RE HERE! ALLELUIA! And the Alleluias will keep ringing.**

**The question we might explore today is, “What does the empty tomb mean to you? Or put another way, “What difference does it make in your life that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead?”**

**Or better yet, let’s look at it from the opposite perspective. What if that tomb wasn’t empty on that Easter morning? What if Jesus hadn’t risen from the dead? What if there had been no Christ?**

**After all Jesus of Nazareth was just one of more than 3,000 people in Judea who was crucified during the Roman occupation. From the Roman perspective, he was just another agitator who was stirring up trouble who had to be gotten rid of . From the perspective of the Jewish High Priest and Sanhedrin, he was a threat to their comfortable collaboration with the Roman occupiers and their hold over the people and the Temple treasury. If anyone would ever bother to tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth, it would have ended on Good Friday.**

**If that tomb was not empty that first Easter Sunday, Peter, Andrew, James, and John would have gone back up to Galilee to take up their fishing business. Mary would have been the shamed widow whose son was crucified as a common criminal. And the other disciples would have gone back to whatever they had done before Jesus came into their lives.**

**If Jesus had not risen from the dead, there never would have been 2,000 years of billions of people claiming to be Christian. There would never have been magnificent cathedrals built throughout the world. There never would have been inspiration for the art of Michalangelo or Leonardo Da Vinci; or the music of Bach, Beethoven, or Brahms.**

**Without a risen Savior, there would have been no teaching from St. Paul or St. Thomas Aquinas or St. Theresa of Avila; no role models like St. Francis of Assisi, Mother Theresa, or Dorothy Day. No Martin Luther or Martin Luther King, Jr.**

**In short, the world would be, if it survived until now, a very different world. Could humanity have survived these past 2,000 years if that tomb had remained shut, holding a cold, dead cadaver? I think not!**

**Now back to us! What does the empty tomb mean to you? What difference does it make in your life that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead?**

**Each of us has to answer those questions for ourselves. As for me I can best answer in the verse of a song from Bill Gaither:**

*Because he lives, I can face tomorrow!*

*Because he lives, all fear is gone!*

*Because I know he holds the future,*

*And life is worth the living, just because he lives!*

**You see, I've lived long enough to have endured much of the suffering that comes with life. I've known the sorrow of losing loved ones; I've experienced lots of failure in my life; I've known sickness and had brushes with death; I've faced the fear of dying with cancer and living with it too.**

**As an old man looking back on my life, it's one of the things that I've come to understand—that the only thing that's really taught me anything is suffering. Not success! It's sweet, but it passes. Not happiness or even contentment. They're shortly undone by the next calamity. Not having stuff or not having stuff. It's only stuff! Not even love, which can be taken from you in an instant. The only thing that's really taught me what life's about is suffering. Life, if you will, is a series of Good Fridays.**

**So, you see, for me, if there were no Easter morning; if that tomb was not empty, if Jesus has not risen, life would not be worth living. But:**

***BECAUSE HE LIVES, I CAN FACE TOMORROW!***

***ALLELUIA!***

***BECAUSE HE LIVES, ALL FEAR IS GONE!***

***ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!***

***BECAUSE I KNOW HE HOLDS THE FUTURE,***

***ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA! ALLELUIA!***

***LIFE IS WORTH THE LIVING,***

***JUST BECAUSE HE LIVES!***

***ALLELUIA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!***

**Now, please don't misunderstand me. Let me explain, again in the words of another lyricist, simply because music speaks to my soul.**

**A man by the name of Paul Jones sings what's in my heart:**

*Yes, I've had some good days, I've had some hills to climb,  
I've had some weary days, and I've had some sleepless  
nights.*

*But when I look around, and think things over,*

*All of my good days outweigh my bad days.*

*I won't complain.*

*Sometimes the clouds are low. I can hardly see the road.*

*I ask a question, Lord. Lord, why so much pain?*

*But he knows what's best for me.*

*Although my weary eyes, they can't see.*

*So, I'll just say Thank you, Lord, I won't complain.*

*You see, the Lord has been good to me.*

*He's been so good to me. All I can do is say,*

*Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Lord! I won't complain.*

**Yes, because He lives, I can face tomorrow. Because He lives, all fear is gone. Because I know he holds the future, and life is worth the living, just because he lives.**

**That's why, in the words of an old classic:**

*I serve a Risen Savior. He's in the world today.  
I know that He is living, whatever people say.  
I see His hand of mercy. I hear His voice of cheer,  
And just the time I need Him, He's always near.  
He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me  
Along life's narrow way.  
He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!  
You ask me how I know He lives/  
He lives within my heart!*

**ALLELUIA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**