

Thursday, April 16

Read Acts 10:34-43. If you have time, read all of Chapter 10 of the Book of Acts. It is 48 verses long and a wonderful story. Our Christian Faith is meant to be transformative and this chapter tells of Peter's transformation from believing that Christ's gift of forgiveness and eternal life is for just the Jews. In the earlier part of Chapter 10, Peter has a dream that ultimately led him to the home of a Roman Soldier, Cornelius. Once, Peter was a fearful follower of Jesus and now he is actually in the home of a man who represented the many fears of not just Peter but all Jewish people – the Roman Empire.

It is this believe that God's love and Jesus' forgiveness is for all humanity that drives the United Methodist movement toward inclusiveness of all people regardless of race, nationality, ethnicity, spiritual background, sexual orientation marital status. God's grace is for all! Meditate on these concepts and Peter's movement toward inclusivity. What are your thoughts? Write them here praying for God's wisdom.

Friday, April 17

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18. The Message ended with the thought that "When death is defeated, so are the barriers between people and between people and God." Death does not have the last word; death is not the final chapter of our eternal lives. That is why we can laugh in the face of death and then laugh and rejoice because of our lives that are abundant and eternal. That truly is something to celebrate and be thankful. Take a moment today to consider the many blessings of your life. Write some of them below. Do you have reason to rejoice? Have you thanked God lately for the blessings you've received? Why not do so right now? Give thanks and be glad!

Message Notes April 12, 2026 *Laughing in the face of Death... and Life!**

- I. An article from 2020: "Recently, however, it's becoming more difficult to tell the difference between a _____ and a _____."
 - A. What's trending now among "death care providers" is less about _____ and _____ and more about _____ in general.
 - B. The article included the phrase, "Think of it as putting the _____ back in funeral."
 - C. This movement toward lively celebrations of life when a loved one dies may just _____ helpful processes of grieving and mourning.
- II. Holy _____ Sunday has its roots in the ancient practice of *Risus Paschalis*.
 - A. In Latin, *risus* translates into the English word "_____." and *Paschalis* is "_____." Side by side, the words say "_____."
 - B. Early Christian leaders who celebrated *Risus Paschalis* often told _____ and uplifting, lighthearted _____ in the days following Easter.
 - C. Many traditions sprang up, including _____ and jokes, to help people lighten up -- reminders to not be too _____.
 - D. In the 17th century _____ Clement X promptly put an end to all this tomfoolery and _____ *Risus Paschalis*.
 - E. Over the past nearly three decades, *Risus Paschalis* has _____ from the _____.
- III. Our Christian Faith is meant to be _____ and the resurrection that we celebrated this past week is the foundation of that _____.

* Acts 10:34-43

- A. It is really a _____ of our lives to be able to laugh at death.
1. We don't deny the reality of our _____ but rather we understand it as part of our lives.
 2. In Acts 10, the spotlight is on _____, whose attitude toward _____ had undergone a transformation.
- B. Because of his encounter with the risen Jesus, Peter was more in the mood to _____.
1. It was _____ who extended the invitation to that rejoicing.
 2. It was a celebration to which _____ was now invited!
- C. God had sent out that message through Israel, but it was now open to everyone, _____ included!
1. This fulfilled God's promise to Abraham that "_____ the nations of the earth" would be _____ through his family (Genesis 12:3).
 2. Don't miss the _____ here. Just a few weeks prior to this, Peter was terrified that a Roman centurion like Cornelius would find him _____.
- IV. When _____ is defeated, so are the _____ between people and between people and God.
- A. Death still stalks us all, but it doesn't have the _____.
 - B. That's something to _____!

Daily Devotional Guide

The following is a daily devotional and study guide meant to enhance your understanding of the message and grow as a Christian.

It is offered for your personal reflection or to share with others.

Monday, April 13

The Message began with some thoughts about how funerals have changed over the past couple decades. In the small town where I (Pastor Jack) grew up, there was at least one evening of visitation

with family and friends and the next day the funeral would be held with a luncheon afterwards. That was a very entrenched pattern. I mentioned that there a very few rules related to funerals. Today, it is common to have an hour of visitation just before the service, with a meal immediately following. All wrapped up in a matter of a few hours. My concern is that this trend doesn't accommodate the grieving process for many people. What difference about funerals have you noticed in recent years? Write your thoughts here.

Tuesday, April 14

Yesterday, it was mentioned that the quick timing of funeral and memorial services may not allow for some people to grieve in their own way. In the message it was mentioned that the movement toward lively celebrations of life when a loved one dies may further inhibit helpful processes of grieving and mourning. Have you notice the change from somber, quiet funerals and memorials to livelier and celebrative services? Do you think that the more common "Celebrations of Life" are always appropriate? Meditate on these questions and write your ideas here.

Wednesday, April 15

This past Sunday we had our Holy Humor Sunday which has become our Central Church tradition over the past several years. As mentioned during the message and in your Message notes, Holy Humor Sunday has its roots in the ancient practice of *Risus Paschalis*. This "Easter Laugh" is meant to empower Christ's followers to laugh in the face of death, to mock the devil and continue the joy of Easter. It is important to recognize that this is not a denial of death but rather a confrontation of death and that our lives continue beyond our last breath on earth. This is Christ's gift to us as our sins are forgiven and we are freed to live lives that are abundant and eternal. How does it make you feel to be freed from that which separates us from our God and others? This is truly a gift to be celebrated! Write your thoughts here.