"Awe"
From Psalm 118

Let's begin with the Easter greeting we all know and love: "Christ is risen!" "Christ is risen indeed!" This simple exchange holds the very heart of our faith. Easter is the day we proclaim that Christ has conquered death. It's the day we declare that hope is stronger than despair, and that life has the final word over death. Because Christ is risen, we can come before God with joyful hearts and give thanks.

But we must remember—resurrection faith is not just about agreeing with a doctrine. It's something much deeper. It isn't just checking a box that says, "Yes, Jesus died and rose again 2,000 years ago." Because if that's all it is, we're still standing outside the tomb—still looking for a lifeless body, instead of encountering a living presence. Think about it: what difference does it make if someone rose from the dead two millennia ago—unless that risen One is alive today?

To believe in the resurrection means this: We believe the risen Christ is not just a figure of the past, but a living presence now. Christ is alive—walking with us, guiding us, holding us. That's the kind of faith Easter invites us into. Not just belief in a past event, but trust in the living God who is here with us now.

Because Christ is risen, we can rise too. Because Christ is alive, we are given new strength. We are set free. A life that once held onto grudges, that was quick to get angry, can now become a life that forgives—and even finds joy. All because of the risen Jesus.

One of my clergy friends once told me a story. It was Good Friday, and he had stopped to get gas. Just as he was about to pull in, another car cut him off and took the spot. He had a bit of a temper, but he told himself, "It's Good Friday—just be patient." So he waited.

But then the guy finished pumping his gas, left his car right there at the pump, and walked off into a convenience store. Minutes passed. Still no sign of him. My friend couldn't take it anymore. So he stomped into the store, fuming.

And there he was—the guy—coming out with both hands full of snacks and drinks. The pastor lost it. "Hey! If you're done pumping gas, move your car before shopping! What kind of nonsense is this?!" But the moment the words came out, he regretted it—because the guy was tall. Really tall. Built. Probably a head taller than the pastor. Now it was awkward. He couldn't take back what he said.

But then something completely unexpected happened. The young man gave him a big smile and said, "Hey brother. Easter is coming! Be happy!" My friend said he had gone in there angry, but it was that stranger—the one he thought was the problem—who ended up preaching the gospel: "Jesus is risen. So let's be happy." And you know what? They both laughed. Right there. In the middle of the store. That's what it means to encounter the risen Christ. To forgive because of Christ. To laugh together because of Christ. To become joyful—not because everything is perfect, but because the tomb is empty and love has the last word.

Resurrection is not just a past event—it's a present reality. It meets us in gas stations, in moments of frustration, in our weakness and weariness, and it whispers: "Be happy. Christ is risen." And maybe that's what Psalm 118 meant when it declared: "This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Even a day of minor annoyances—or deep heartache—can become a day of joy when Christ is alive in it. Because if the tomb is empty, joy is never out of reach. So let's carry that joy—the unshakable, forgiving, freeing joy of Easter—into the world. Into our homes. Into our

relationships. Into this weary, waiting world. Christ is risen. And his love will never burn out. And when you believe that, even the most ordinary moment can become holy. Amen.