

One of the most extraordinary prayers ever prayed. Our beloved Savior, before He went out that night to in the garden, sweating drops of blood, prayed to His Father:...**that they may have my joy fulfilled in them.**

Jesus knew full well what lay ahead of Him: a long night of interrogation followed by R-rated sheer horror. Yet this was His finest hour, His glory. For this very purpose He came into the world.

So Christ's sacrifice that first Holy Week, a sacrifice of love, willingly laid down His life, poured out His blood for us all. As Scripture. **For the joy set before Him, He endured that cross, scorning its shame, and now seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

Remarkably - that's the very joy He wants to share with you. Give you. Place in you. Joined in you. **My joy fulfilled in you.**

An illness has broken out in this area, many have died, and then the pastor of this congregation catches it too. 110 years ago. Typhoid. He dies serving this church, only 26 years old. Pastor Demetrio. 9 days later his wife Ida dies for it too. A pastor's wife vocation comes with crosses. Their orphaned 14-month girl goes to live with grandparents in Emma MO. Steve Mariano can show you all their graves there.

Every age has dealt as with these days. Every family, you have had that quiet moment before the casket of a loved one, when death seemed to be ascendant over life. And you can still see them in your memories, hear their voice, remember their embrace, and now you can shed tears at a grave.

Luther wrote in the Easter hymn we just sang, **when Life and death contended.** Our days are filled with many joys, laughs, sure most of you aren't very funny and lack a sense of humor, but still.

And you have days that are long. Days that hurt. Disappointment. Families fight, broken, struggle. The best laid plans come undone. At times it seems you labor in vain. You trust in God, you look to Him for good and better things. You rightly pray to Him, cry out to Him for mercy. Even wonder if you are heard, how your prayers will be answered, especially **when life and death contend.** We've all been there. Death has stolen too much from you already... It's a hard reality we all face, that forces you to acknowledge *-you really aren't in control AND there is nothing to fear or can truly harm.*

Christ's empty tomb brings certainty. There's still pain and sorrow, losing loved ones still hurts; we still mourn, but not others do, as ones who have no hope. **Remember how He told you, the Son of Man must**

be delivered, crucified and on the third day rise. And they remembered His words.

Remember how He told you, and they remembered all He said. One who believes and is baptized, is received into the joy of heaven with God, there to await the day of Christ return when their body too will be resurrected, reunited with their soul. All this proven on Easter.

Remember how He told you, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies. Whoever lives and believes in me will never die.

Death has served your loved one in Christ their greatest joy, you're still celebrating Easter with them, celebrating the feast with them right here, joining your song with their before His throne. It's happening. Don't you crave that reunion, to see them again, feel their touch, hear their voice, hug them again. You will.

Remember how He told you. And foremost don't you crave the embrace from your Lord's nail scarred hands.

Until then, the world, life becomes more and more chaotic, you have our own share of frustration and pain. Amid the emptiness, false security, lies and confusion of the world and in the face of your sin and death comes this glorious Easter gospel, Jesus the Christ, true man, true God, crucified, dead for your offenses, is raised for you -to be justified, given His peace, given His life. And how we need Him! We have nothing of value without Him. In Christ, you have everything. Everything He is, everything He does, He does for you. It's yours.

Remember how He told you. as you hear lies about God, when Satan tempts you to think you are alone and unloved. When tempted and amid your sins, **remember how He told you**, repent, for you dear sinful child I have come.

Remember how He told you, your eternal life is sealed, in His Word, His Sacraments. Do you grasp your reality? Today we're celebrating Easter not just because God died and rose from the dead, but because He gives you His resurrected life.

Remember how He told you, He would carry your burdens; lead and guide you. forgive your sins; wipe away your tears, comfort you when you mourn.

Remember how He told you, He attends to your prayers, even those you fail to pray. Your prayers are answered far greater than you ask for or realize. And foremost He has taken care of your greatest need, enduring

wrath of sin on a cross to give you eternal life now.

Remember how He told you, He would care for you all your days, and feed you His very body and blood, He said whoever eats my flesh and drink my blood has eternal life.

Remember how He told you. Not a hair on your head will perish. No matter what happens to you in this life, no matter what trials or hardships, no matter what suffering you may face, even if death itself stare you down, you have joy and peace. Knowing that nothing will compare to the glory that will be yours. You bear His name, you will be exalted as He is. Death cannot hold Him and will not hold you.

Remember how He told you. Bask in the forgiveness of sins. Bask in the beautiful reality of this day. **When Life and death contended. The victory remained with life. The reign of death was ended. Holy Scripture plainly saith That death is swallowed up by Death (His death), its sting is lost forever.**

Remember how he told you. You will never die. Death is dead. The tomb is empty, He did it all for you. He gives it all to you. You have nothing to fear, you are never alone. Bask in the beauty of this day, of heaven and earth coming together here. You will see your Lord face to face and embrace your loved ones again, until then Today, tomorrow, everyday living in the gifts of His passion -**My joy fulfilled in you.** He holds you for what lies ahead. He is risen just as He said. The Lord is risen!