*Christ is risen from the dead,*

*Trampling down death by death,*

*And upon those in the tombs*

*Bestowing life!*

*In the name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

After the long solemn Good Friday service, a choir member, a staff member, and I went out to lunch. It's always good to be with those guys, and I like the place we went to eat enough, but I wouldn't call the experience particularly memorable. At least until we got into the car to come back to the church. We had spent a fair amount of time talking about what music we loved and played when we were teenagers. One song in particular from our youth made us laugh; it’s a song that 100 percent has not aged well, had very little redeeming value other than nostalgia (and maybe some sweet drum fills I guess). But one of our number was juuuust young enough to totally miss the reference and had no idea what song we were talking about. And yes, I'm well aware of the fact that it's a symptom of getting older.

As we got to the bridge of this bad nineties rock song, as every part of 1998 came spilling out of my truck's speakers and into our youngest members' ears, I looked into the back seat and just saw the biggest smile and then heard the loudest laugh.

And I thought, hey, this is pretty rad.

Not the song, mind you, that song is dumb. No, it was the simple joy of being together with some folks that I really admire, some folks with whom I have prayed, had lunch, adored Christ, and with whom I have developed real human bonds in the fourteen months since coming here.

In comparison to the Son of God's victory over death by his rising to New Life on the third day, a car ride playing a dumb Nu-Metal song seems like a small thing; and I suppose it really is. But for those brief moments of a silly, simple car ride, the more lavish joy of the Jesus' empty tomb is still manifest. After the initial confusion of the empty tomb, what joy it must have been among Jesus' friends and family upon realizing that his death three days before could not hold him. What joy it must have been for them to finally realize that everything he said about himself was true; that his ministry was about breaking the chains of sin and death, about bringing people back to their God in his Body and Blood. What joy it must have been for the disciples to enjoy Jesus, listen to him, and pray with him for forty days before his ascension to the right hand of the father. What joy it must have been, even when they argued amongst themselves after Pentecost, to bring the message of the Risen Savior to the Judea, Samaria, and to the Ends of the Earth.

What a joy it is to serve him even now, to know, worship, and obey him right here.

That Easter joy is an important part of what animates the life of the Church, what fueled her earliest proclamation and what gives the Church any standing at all in the world. When we proclaim that Jesus is Risen, we are saying that the world we all see and endure, the world that always seems so broken and tattered on our social news feeds or on TV or in the newspaper, that world was made by God, and He has not given up on it. When we proclaim the New Life of Jesus' resurrection by word and action, we are saying that death's icy grip, sin's wicked cords, have no more control over us, and that in our Risen Savior we have put on his New Life for ourselves, and we cannot help but share it with the world.

Thus, that vertical slice, that small sample of joy I began with, that car ride with a ninety’s song blaring on Utica, this is a type of how Jesus' followers help heal the world around us. Simply put, our work is to be present to the Risen Savior and enjoy his presence among us, and then to bring Christ's Resurrection joy out to the world. When we bring Christ's joy out to the world, as empowered by the Holy Spirit, we bring all sorts of amazing things with us. We take needful things like "love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." We take with us one of joy's most wonderful siblings, hope. And when we allow for the New Life that Christ has won for us on that First Easter to truly change our hearts, we become the types of people that radiate off joy, hope, and all the rest.

Indeed, in Christ, we become the type of people that can truly push up against the wages of terrible death. When Jesus would have us love our neighbors as ourselves, I'm not sure what program or initiative he had in mind, but I suspect the logic is simple: sharing Christ's love from the bottom of our hearts is a world-changing proposition. One of our vestry members once observed that I'm a long game kind of thinker and planner. He's right; I pray that I have Christ's eternity in mind when I work through our life together. I believe small works in faith can have great benefits across time. Thus when we leave this place today I pray that we'll be ready to bring Christ's love and joy to our work, to our families, to our classrooms, or wherever we go; being the sorts of people who, even in small yet still profound ways, bring the light of Easter joy such that the gate and grave of death cannot prevail where we have been.

Could it be that a car ride with a couple dudes from Church would be imbued with that much importance? Probably not. But then again, maybe? I suppose I'll leave it to you to discover how much good Christ's joy can do in and among you even in the small joys God gives us. I just hope your soundtrack is better than ours was. In any case, as you go out into the world for Easter brunch, or parties, or in my case, a post Holy Week nap, recall these words that Christ's life might be with you:

Christ is risen from the dead,

*Trampling down death by death,*

*And upon those in the tombs*

*Bestowing life!*

To God be all glory. Amen.