

Easter joy is hard to match. It has no comparison to which we can really give an example. The fact that Jesus lives and the tomb is empty brings an excitement and thrill that changes things for us. But it only does that because the empty tomb of Easter is always and forever joined to the reality of Good Friday.

Without Good Friday, our joy is superficial. That is, we are just excited that Jesus is alive. But with Good Friday, our joy can run deep. It can fill our hearts, souls, and our whole self because we know that on the cross of Good Friday our sins have been paid for and we will be raised and live forever with our Savior. Without Good Friday, it's as simple as a guy who was once dead is now alive. But with Good Friday, we know that He's *our* guy. He's our guy who took the curse of sin into His own self, paid what we owe, and took sin's result - death - defeated it. This He proves by showing Himself alive. What joy!

Without Good Friday, I don't know that Jesus' wounds in His resurrected body are for me. Without Good Friday, I'm unsure of just how deeply Jesus loves me and humbled Himself to make me His own. Without Good Friday, I'm uncertain if a payment has been made that will free me from fear the of my grave. But with Good Friday, I see the scars on His resurrected body by which I am healed; I embrace that love which made Him obedient unto death for me; I'm certain that His sacrifice on Calvary is enough to chase away all my fears.

And so it is that Good Friday indeed leads us to the joyful alleluias of Easter Day. We are happy not only because our Lord Jesus is alive, but also because it assures us that we will live always with Him! Sin and the grave have been defeated! St. Paul says, *If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his (Rom. 6:5)*. United with Jesus and His resurrection is a joyful comfort to all sinners who see Good Friday as the gateway to Easter!

Our Lord Jesus died for us, but He now lives. He has won the victory over the fear of the grave. He's not just a guy. He's *our* guy who has secured eternal joy. Let this joy fill your heart, soul, and your whole self as you proclaim, "Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!"

*The foe in triumph shouted
When Christ lay in the tomb;
But lo, he now is routed,
His boast is turned to gloom.
For Christ again is free;
In glorious victory
He who is strong to save
Has triumphed o'er the grave.
(LSB 467 st. 2)*

A joyous Easter,
Pastor Suggitt