

April 24, 2022

## THE EASTER LAUGH

In Slavic countries of Eastern Europe, Christians have a special day designated for laughter—the day after Easter. It’s called *Risus Paschalis*, “the Easter Laugh.” We would expect the day after Easter to be a happy one. What might surprise us is the specific reason these Christians laugh. They gather together for a big festival in the churchyard to “celebrate the big joke that God pulled on Satan.”

By possessing Judas who then betrayed Jesus unto death, Satan clearly thought he’d had the last laugh. He failed to understand the scandal of the Gospel: that Christ conquered by dying; that Christ won by apparently losing; that what Satan intended for maximum evil, God would use for maximum good. No one likes to be laughed at. Satan is no exception. And when, at Satan’s bidding, “the kings of the earth set themselves . . . against the LORD and against His Messiah,” the LORD “who sits in the heavens laugh[ed]; the Lord h[eld] them in derision” (Psalm 2:2, 4). On Easter Sunday, the LORD enjoyed a hearty guffaw at the devil and his minions’ expense.

Martin Luther advised God’s people to make laughing at Satan not just an annual event but a daily practice. He said, “I often laugh at Satan, and there is nothing that makes him so angry as when I attack him to his face, and tell him that through God I am more than a match for him.” When we look at our broken world, though, laughing is often the last thing we want to do. Our crushed hearts want to sob out loud, “THIS IS NOT THE WAY IT’S SUPPOSED TO BE.” And we are right. This is not the *shalom* God intended. This is not *the way it’s supposed to be*.

But Easter Sunday is God’s unmistakable sign to us that one day all things will be made new; one day everything will be the way it’s supposed to be; one day shalom will be restored. Until that day, we take inspiration from the Proverbs 31 woman: “Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come” (Proverbs 31:25). When she looks to the future, she doesn’t fear; she doesn’t worry; she doesn’t weep; she laughs. How much more we believers now in the wake of Easter Sunday: we can, and should, laugh loudly and joyfully with Him, the crucified and risen One, who truly gets the last laugh.

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