

EASTER BLESSINGS TO ALL

"The Good News"

By The Reverend Stan Hoobing, Hope-Valby Lutheran Parish
Wake up. It's Easter. It is the day of the resurrection. Gone forever is the past. Say goodbye to guilt, fear, doubt, despair, depression. Say hello to the Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. New life has begun.

The daily news is bad... Thomas Hamilton, a disgruntled youth worker, massacres 16 five and six year olds, their teacher and then takes his own life... Agent Orange is linked to birth defects in babies of Vietnam veterans... a high school in New York bans Magic Johnson's book on AIDS. But the Good News is seldom heard: "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He has been raised." (Matthew 28:5-6)

Get it straight. God is in charge of the world. He has raised His only Son from the grave. There is new life now... abundant life.

Yesterday might have been old and boring, but now it is Easter. It is the moment of Resurrection. Jesus has conquered death. Hallelujah! Life is exciting, just you hear and see.

Every day is Easter and we celebrate that news with friends old and new who loudly proclaim the words of Cyril A. Arlington, "Good Christian friends, rejoice and sing! Now is the triumph of our King! To all the world glad news we bring: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!"

"Peace Be With You"

By The Reverend Lea Mathieu, Ione United Church of Christ
When we think of God's gifts at the Easter season, we often think of eternal life and salvation from sin. But the risen Christ's first words to his followers point us to another Easter gift: "peace be with you." (John 20:19)

The Hebrew concept of peace, or "shalom," is much more than the absence of conflict. It is fullness of life-harmony, wholeness, health in body and soul. Jesus said, "I came that you might have life, and have it abundantly." God's peace in our souls and in our relationships is the hallmark of the abundant, fulfilled life.

In our world, such peace is greatly lacking. There is brokenness between nations, within societies, in families and in ourselves. The peace of God that Jesus proclaimed at Easter overcomes all the hatred and fears that keep us from realizing God's will. "In the world you will have tribulation," Jesus said, "but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world."

Shalom comes from believing that God does indeed overcome the world and that the world's darkness does not and cannot overcome God's light. True peace arises from having faith, trust, hope and love through all our celebrations and challenges, just as Jesus did through His ministry, death and resurrection.

This Easter and always, may "peace be with you."

"The Hope of Easter"

By Father Gerry Condon, St. Patrick-St. William Catholic Parish

During the season of Lent, Christianity around the world has focused on the suffering and death of our Savior, Jesus Christ. It is good to contemplate His suffering. We come to know Him better. We come to know a little of the infinite love He has for each of us. When we see Him with arms outstretched on the cross, we know we are welcome, we know we are loved. When we think of the sharp thorns that pierced His sacred head, we know that He loved us. When we visualize the whips, with pieces of metal and bone attached, tearing apart His sacred body, we know we are loved. When we listen to the hammer-blows driving the nails into His sacred hands and feet, we know that we are loved. When we look at the lance jabbed into His sacred side, we know that we are loved.

When we listen to His words, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," we know that He will also forgive us. When we hear Him say, "I thirst," we know that His thirst is for souls-yours, mine and everyone else. When we listen to His words, "Into your hands I commend my spirit," we know that death is not the end of all, but the way to eternity.

Death was the way that He chose to the resurrection. Consequently the resurrection is a source of hope to a world that knows Him not. Would there be violence if everyone believed His teachings? Would there be hatred? Greed? Deception? Lust? Envy? Our modern world seems to turn away from His principles. Hence, Easter is a challenge to our world. If we really want peace, if we want true happiness, then turn to Him, live by His principles. There really is no other way. In fact, He said, "I am the way..." So Easter is a challenge to our modern world, a challenge to rise out of deception, a challenge to reach for true joy, true happiness, true peace.

"A Transformation"

By The Reverend Al Miller, All Saints' Episcopal Church

I remember a calm spring day. The air was cold, clear and clean. The leaves had not yet emerged from their new sheaths. There was still snow on the ground. All seemed dead. No new life was yet emerging in the woods. I was walking amongst an older grove of fir trees lining the ruts of an old road. They stood there as sentinels standing guard over a long ago used pathway now abandoned for pavement and expediency.

This tract of land had once been farmed. When the farming could no longer sustain the family who lived here, a second-growth forest emerged. Some 40 years ago, the wood lot had been cut and cleared for the value of the wood and was promptly sold because it would take another 60 years to make a new profit for its owner. When the new landlords moved in, it was for a different sort of farming.

I was standing here amongst these trees while on retreat at a Benedictine monastery. The farming was now the tending of souls and these trees now carried different meaning, a sense of sacred space in which to restore the soul. As I stood there amongst those trees, I realized that the last four days worth of soul-searching, reading, worship and confession had caused a transformation in me. God had washed me from the inside to the outside. Just as the crocus would soon begin that transformation from winter to spring, so had Jesus effected in me a transformation just as real and just as powerful. Old things and old places could indeed take on new meaning.

Easter is a time for us to realize that God desires this transformation in us. New hope is brought through old timbers. Death will not be the last word; life will be. Seek out God's transforming message for your heart this Easter.

"The Mark of a Remarkable God"

By Pastor Andrew Johnson, First Christian Church

The celebration of Easter and all of its significance has arrived. We celebrate the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, an event we read about in the Gospels. I was contemplating the significance of this remarkable event in which the remarkable man-God-rose from the grave. Then a thought occurred to me, "Why not?" Why is it so remarkable that the Creator God of this universe, who is before all things and in Him all things hold together (Col. 1:17), raised from the dead? There is nothing remarkable about God doing what only God can do and rising from the dead, unless...

Unless you consider why Jesus did what He did. Be honest with yourself. We all think we are good. Okay. Not so bad. Even with that perspective, we know that our world has big problems. Whether you are coming from the right or the left, liberal or conservative, Christian, atheist, Buddhist, etc.... You pick the group and ask them how the world is; if they are honest, they will admit that things are not so good. We are not so good. We humans have some problems. If we are honest, we have some major problems.

What does this have to do with a remarkable God? God did a very easy thing for God to do, raise himself from the dead. It is not that remarkable until you understand that He did it to give us, very unremarkable humans with our major problems and all our character flaws, a chance. A chance to live in a perfect place with God even after we destroyed His first perfect creation with our sin. Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." God died for you and for me. He, being good, perfect, righteous, just, holy, pure, died for us of the world who are bad, guilty, unjust, unholy, dirty. The mark that makes God remarkable is that He cares for those who are so unremarkable. Insignificant. Imperfect.

This year, we come again to the celebration of the cross and the celebration of the resurrection. Two remarkable events that make the merely unremarkable remarkable for the remarkable God. My friends, may you find in Him that which you can find nowhere else.

Missionaries to speak at Life Center

The Reverend Bill Johnston, Assemblies of God missionary to Swaziland, will be the guest speaker at Christian Life Center, 535 W. Morgan St., Heppner, on Thursday, April 4 at 6:30 p.m., according to Reverend Tim Van Cleave, pastor.

Bill and his wife, Sharon, have had a broad ministry in Africa over the past 20 years. Focusing on both evangelism and discipleship, the Johnstons have assisted in the foundation of numerous new churches through tent crusades, taught in several Assemblies of God Bible schools and promoted the use of correspondence Bible courses. After working in Ghana for one term, they spent two terms in Liberia before being reassigned to Swaziland.

Besides overseeing the growth of the church they started in Swaziland, Bill teaches at the Swaziland College of Theology, directs the distribution and use of ICI University correspondence courses and puts together a weekly 30 minute radio program.

Sharon teaches full-time at the Bible college. Her students come from several nations in Southern Africa. While in Liberia, she had overseen that country's ICI University program involving 7,000 students. The Johnstons look forward to their return to Swaziland. "We believe God has placed us in the Kingdom of Swaziland for a specific purpose," Bill says. "It is exciting to see it unfold."

The Kingdom of Swaziland is about the size of New Jersey and is located in southern Africa near the Indian Ocean. About 90 percent of the population of nearly one million belong to the Swazi, a Bantu people. English and SiSwati, a Zulu dialect, are both official languages.

Marriage Licenses

The Morrow County Clerk's office at the courthouse in Heppner reports issuing the following marriage licenses during the past month:

March 8: Antonio Sandoval Arellano, 27, Boardman; and Almadia Pinedo Estrada, 25, Boardman.

March 26: Ralph Carl Green, 36, Juneau, Alaska; and Katherine Ann Monjay, 36, Boardman.

April 2: William I. Kelly, 50, Lassen, California; and Janet S. Eakin, 50, Hermiston.

Meeting changed

The Heppner City's Charter Committee meeting scheduled for Tuesday, April 2, at 7 p.m., has been changed to Thursday, April 4, at 7 p.m.

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"Confident Faith or Trembling in Fear"

By The Reverend Duane Jones, Church of the Nazarene

It makes one shudder when we think about the evil and devastation caused by war. It sends a chill down our spine. Over the centuries of recorded history, million of soldiers and civilians have died due to the ravages of war. Military conflicts have literally shaped the course of history. Wars have not changed history. War is history in the making.

Wars are expensive when you consider the maiming and killing of people. During the short history of the United States of America, the loss of life has been great. Counting the Civil War, Collier's Encyclopedia reports that nearly one million U.S. soldiers have died serving our nation. When the death tolls of our allies are added, we then have an astonishing 15.5 million soldiers who died for the salvation of our freedom. World War II alone cost us and our allies more than 775.4 billion dollars (\$775,488,000,000) Not one penny that was spent to wage a war ever brought back to life even one of those souls that perished.

Millions of people have given their lives for the benefit of one. However, some 2,000 years ago, one man gave His life for the benefit of billions of people. In doing this for you, He did in fact change the course of history. The monetary cost was only thirty pieces of silver, probably worth about \$20 today.

This man died for your spiritual freedom. You spiritual freedom from sorrow, pain, grief and suffering. He provided salvation to you from a life filled with evil, fear, hatred, anger and malice. A life free of sin and the effects from sin. He provided for you a life of eternal salvation with Christ.

Yes, that man is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He was crucified and died that day long ago. Yet, as prophesied, he defeated the grave. He was victorious in the war waged against Him by His adversary. Then on the third day following His execution, He rose from the dead. That act is the foundation of our Christian faith. Just as God raised Jesus from death, so shall He also save you.

Later, the Apostle John wrote these words of encouragement for us: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (John 3:16-18)

Do not be deceived by simply "believing" that Jesus is the Son of God and by believing that you are saved and home free. Scripture tells us that you must be a "Born Again" believer and follow Him. This is why in the book of James, it is written: "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder." (James 2:19) Hum...do you feel a draft?



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