

Rejoice in the Miracle of Easter

Hope Lutheran, Valby Lutheran
All Saints Episcopal
Rolling Stones

Nazarene Church
The Eulogy and Burial of Jesus

The women who came to the tomb on the first Easter morning were there to bring spices for the body of Jesus Christ, their Lord, who had been crucified the previous Friday evening. It was the custom, the right thing to do, among the Jewish people, to prepare the body of a deceased loved one in this way.

But as the women walked to the tomb, they were concerned. They knew that a large stone was blocking the entrance to the tomb. "How will we roll the stone away? Is there anyone who can roll it away for us?" they wondered. "If we can't roll away the stone, how will we prepare the body of our Lord?"

All of us, from time to time, have something that blocks our access to Christ, like the stone that blocked the way for those women on Easter morning. For some of us the stone is a lack of faith in Christ, or skepticism about the possibility of resurrection. For others their stone might be a mistrust of organized religion or the lack of a connection to a church. Drug addiction, alcoholism, unemployment, guilty conscience, misfortune, family problems, the list goes on and on. Many things can act as a stone that blocks our access to Christ.

The women on Easter morning knew that they would not be able to roll the stone away. We often try to roll our own stones ourselves. We may be able to move them a little bit, or think we have, but eventually we often realize that we have failed.

When the women arrived at the tomb, they were amazed to see that the stone had been moved away, and that the Lord is risen from the dead. Eventually they realized that both of these problems had been resolved by the power of God.

Whatever stone that blocks our access to Christ can only be finally moved by the power of God. God uses many tools in moving the stone: the bible, the Church, our friends, our family, and other people. We are also quite capable of moving the stone back into blocking position, if that's what we want!

I pray that during this Easter season you will reflect on your life to see where there may be a blocking stone. I pray that you will also pray that God will open your eyes to see how God is beginning to move that stone. I pray that you will look for help in the Bible, the Church, your friends, your family, and other people. I pray that you will have a blessed Easter season.

The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!

Pastor Tom Hill

Christian Life Center The Empty Tomb

The angel told the women coming to anoint Jesus body, "Don't be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him."

The empty tomb is the central theme of the Bible and Christianity. After sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, God began His plan of redemption. He planned that His Son, Jesus Christ, would die in our place, for our sins. But that wouldn't be the end of the story. Jesus would rise from the dead, victorious over sin and death.

Without the empty tomb, our lives would be without hope. There would be no way to rid our souls of the guilt of sin. There would be no way for us to gain eternal life in heaven. But praise God, Jesus did rise from the dead and now we can experience His resurrection life in our lives. We can have a personal relationship with the Father because of the empty tomb.

We often hear the phrases, "all roads lead to heaven," or "many roads lead to God." However, Jesus Himself stated that he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Man can only gain access to God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Most people in our community believe in God. Many go to church, talk about God, and do good deeds. But I ask you, "Do you know Jesus personally?" The bible says that knowing about Him is not enough. Belief in Jesus Christ means placing one's trust in Him and becoming His follower.

Are you following Him? have you experienced Him? The empty tomb is more than just a good story; it is God reaching out to man, offering hope for the forgiveness of sin, and hope for eternal life in Heaven. The empty tomb is God's love manifested to us through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Have a Blessed Easter!

Tim Van Cleave, pastor

St. Patrick's Church Let us nourish our souls

Many people have a favorite restaurant where they like to eat. It seems that when they go there they receive the food they want, cooked the way they want it, and served in an appealing way. Even for those of us who do not have such a place, we make sure that in our own homes that we have an abundance of the food we like. Our natural appetite gives that inclination to partake frequently. When we do so our bodies are nourished adequately.

Perhaps it is only natural that we would ask ourselves what we do to adequately nurture our soul. Do we attend church, read the bible, learn from writers of spirituality, spend time in prayer? Yet all of these are only a means of getting to know Our Lord, Jesus Christ. During these last days of Lent the church portrays vividly his sufferings and death. It brings to our attention how he was betrayed, beaten, crowned with thorns, forced to carry his cross to Calvary, and there died by crucifixion. The church helps us to know what he did for our salvation, helps us to understand the infinite love he has for each of us.

Recently I underwent surgery. Following the surgery there was a period of total dependence on others. At first it was doctor, nurses, technicians, helpers, then friends and acquaintances. As time went by I was gradually able to do more and more things for myself. Yet, in fact, there will always be some dependence on others. Being dependent on others, and experiencing their response helps me to know how much more I can depend on Jesus. By way of comparison, we are all dependent on the salvation won for us by Our Savior. From His cross pours out His infinite love. He does not force us to respond, but invites each of us to come to him. Yet if the Gospel accounts had ended with his death, we might be hesitant to respond. In fact, they continue and tell of his resurrection. The apostles gave their very lives for that faith, a further assurance of the veracity of the gospels.

Consequently, each of us can face the fact that we are dependent on him, and that he will give us abundant chances to achieve the eternal goal he has offered us. Let us nourish our souls with the inspiration the church offers us, the knowledge given us in the Gospels, and experience strength of faith because of the example of the apostles. May the Lord bless each of us in our efforts to serve him.

Fr. Gerry Condon

It was about mid-day, when Jesus bowed His head and died. At that very moment several things happened. 1) the veil in the temple was torn in two from the top down to the bottom. 2) the sun stopped shining, literally the sun failed. Interestingly, the Greek word for "fail" is the equivalent to the English word "eclipse". However, this could not have been a natural eclipse. Because by Mosaic Law the celebration of 'Pass-over' must occur during a full moon. Thus the moon would have been on the opposite side of the earth from the sun. so this would have been an unnatural darkness. Matthew, Mark and Luke each mentioned this phenomenon with no attempt at explanation. 3) The Earth convulsed (earthquake) and rocks cracked, just as terrorizing then as it is for us today. 4) Graves broke open and the bodies of many holy people were raised to life.

We could make a sermon or write a book about any one of these events. Yet something even more profound happened following the moment Jesus bowed His head and died. The Roman Centurion in charge of the execution, standing in front of Jesus, exclaimed: "Surely this man was the son of God".

These are the only recorded words in Scripture spoken over the body of Jesus. Ironically, these words were not spoken by one of his trusted disciples, or a priestly leader. Rather a hardened, pagan Roman soldier spoke them, a centurion, the same centurion who ordered the nails to be driven into the hands and feet of Jesus.

Traditional church history claims this centurion's name was Longinus. Tradition says that Longinus accepted Jesus Christ that day as his personal Savior. On that day he acknowledged Christ as being the Son of God. Ultimately, later in life he too was put to death for being a herald of the resurrection of Christ.

We can learn something from Longinus by how he responded to the goodness of Jesus. First, He saw the goodness of Jesus' reaction to his persecutors. how it must have touched his heart when Jesus proclaimed from the cross: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do". <Luke 23:34 (KJV)>

Second, he witnessed the living evidence of Jesus' righteousness as recorded in scripture: "Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man". <Luke 23:47 (KJV)>

Third, he saw the contrast between the values of Jesus as compared to the world. Longinus saw that Jesus' concern for others was greater than His concern for Himself. He saw Jesus' innocence through the purity of Christ's human nature. He saw Him as faultless, perfect, blameless, sinless and guiltless.

Longinus responded to the God-likeness of Jesus. Jesus was God made visible to the world. The Love of God was made evident through Jesus that day. Illustration: A small boy stood with his older brother looking at a portrait of their father, who had died when the boy was only a baby. The youngster asked his brother Henry, "what was father like?" Henry tried his best to describe their father. he was a good man, strong, kind, honest, and handsome. However the small lad had difficulty visualizing his father's characteristics. Interrupting his big brother he asked, "Tell me one thing, Henry, was dad anything like you?" "Well", Henry admitted, "Friends of our family who knew him best say I'm the living image of dad". With his heart aglow and a smile lighting his face the small boy walked away saying, "Now, I know exactly what my dad was like: he was just like my brother Henry". Jesus was God made visible to our world. In Him we see God the Father, For they are exactly alike: "Surely this Man Was The Son Of God!"

The laws of Rome allowed for the execution of Jesus. Yet, Jewish law forbids that a body could be left hanging over night. Especially when the next day was the Sabbath. Considering that the Sabbath begins at Sundown on Friday, time was running out. "If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day..." <Deut 21:22-23>

It was not unusual for bodies of criminals to not be claimed. Those bodies were dumped unceremoniously into the ground. This was not case for Jesus. An unknown Jewish leader came forward. His name was, Joseph (of Arimathea).

At great personal risk he could lose everything including his life, Joseph acknowledged that he was a secret disciple of Jesus. So after acquiring permission from Pilate he removed the body of Christ from the cross. Along with his friend Nicodemus they prepared the body for burial and placed it in an unused tomb. Illustration: along many coastlines buoys are anchored. they float high in the water so when waves hit them a bell is caused to ring, thus giving an audio warning to passing ships. When the waters are calm the buoys are silent.

Joseph of Arimathea was a buoy. He was one of those good men who remains silent when everything was calm. But when the storms come they will speak out loud and clear.

Joseph of Arimathea revealed his true-self that afternoon. He and Nicodemus did not hesitate to admit the truth. In the stormy political climate they sounded an alarm the world could hear.

We too, should be firm in our faith and sound an alarm that a storm is coming. All Christians must stand-up for Jesus. Don't live your life in darkness, confusion and shame. When Jesus calls you, stand up and declare: "I am for Jesus, I choose to follow Him."

Come out of hiding if you love Jesus and you'll find that you are not alone. First Joseph stepped-out; then his friend Nicodemus stepped-out. Now, this week, will you step-out for Jesus? Someone is waiting to follow you. Someone is watching for your actions. Someone will be influenced by your decision and they will gain courage to join you in step-out for Jesus. William Gladstone said: "One example is worth a thousand arguments."

Joseph and Nicodemus, believing it was too late to join Jesus, lost their opportunity. Still they acted. Jesus was dead. As far as they could see, this was a conclusion to a very sad story. Yet, they still dared to believe in Him. It seemed their hope had died, the last glimmer of light had flickered out. So, they rolled a large stone over the entrance to the grave then they departed broken hearted.

To them and everyone else the last chapter had been written, Jesus was dead. The final two words in this saga has been penned. The end.

Well that's what they believed. What they did not know was that God is the final author. He has the last word. And God had already written in the book.... "To be continued"

Scripture references and excerpts taken from Mark Chapter 15: and Matthew Chapter 27 (NIV)

Rev. Duane Jones

Heppner First Christian Church The Mark of A Remarkable God

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. OK! 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 friend, may you find in him that, which you can find nowhere else.

Andrew Johnson, Minister

Heppner United Methodist Church Beyond finitude, boundedness

I begin this Easter message with a confession: I am a "Star Trek" fan. Yes, a Trekkie. It is about the only show my wife and I watch with any regularity. Just the other day, there was an episode of "Star Trek: Voyager" that we had never seen. In that show Tom Paris, the pilot of voyager, succeeded at piloting a shuttle craft at what had been thought to be an impossible speed, Warp 10. (If you aren't familiar with the Star Trek lingo, don't worry. It is just very, very, very fast. Faster than you or I will ever travel, thank heavens.) In this episode, it was explained to us that at Warp 10 a person can break through a time-space barrier of finitude and achieve a state in which one is simultaneously present everywhere in the universe.

Wow. Simultaneously present everywhere. That is beyond the comprehension of most of us. We as humans are used to our boundedness, our finitude. We experience reality as only right here, right now, where our bodies are. Yes, our minds may go out and wander around the universe a bit, but our basic experience of the universe is circumscribed closely by our physical existence. We are born, we live and we die, and our bodies molder and return to natural elements. At least, that is what we see with our eyes. Is there anything more?

But nearly 2000 years ago something happened that begs the question of our finitude and boundedness. A man known as Yeshua bar Yosef, or Jesus the son of Joseph rose from the dead. He was executed by the Roman government by being impaled with nails and hung upon a large wooden cross until he died. It was gruesome. But he was dead. They even speared his side to be sure. He was then buried. He had been born, had lived and had died. But something happened that has forever changed the way we understand the human condition: he rose again from the dead. Or to put it more correctly, he was raised from the dead. By God. by the One with whom he was so intimately in touch that he called that One "Abba," or "Daddy."

How has this changed forever the way we understand human finitude and boundedness? Consider it like this. Picture an oyster lying on the bed of the ocean. If a small grain of sand gets inside the oyster, it slowly wraps an excretion around the grain which becomes a pearl. Now imagine that instead of a grain of sand a small diamond makes its way inside the oyster, and that a pearl forms around it. The pearl is magnificent and beautiful, but deep within it is something far more precious, far more valuable. We are like that pearl. Our life here is glorious and wonderful for a brief span of time, and we marvel at all that we can do and accomplish. We are like that pearl, magnificent and beautiful, but not really conscious of the far more precious diamond at the center of our being. Wrapped deeply within the "mortal coil" of this life (as Hamlet puts it) is the Divine Spirit, a diamond-gift of the Infinite.

In Jesus, God worked (and still works to this day) to show us that we are much more than simply our material and physical existence. We carry within us the Divine Imprint, like a diamond at the center of our being. But we have covered over that imprint with all the glory and sorrows, the pain and the achievements of our life, and marveled at this pearly wonder.

Resurrection is when that pearl is broken open to reveal the Divine Diamond within. Resurrection is when God breaks into the midst of our human conceits and vainglorious devices to show us who we really are, who we have been created to be, and gives us the power to become that person. Resurrection happens because God is Infinite and Unbounded, but has chosen to make a home within our hearts.

So come join us in Church this Sunday, and every Sunday. Come not because you are a polished pearl, but because there is something far greater within you, and God is waiting to show it to you. You won't travel at Warp 10, but the bounds of who you are will get opened. And that's a promise.

The Rev. Craig S. Strobel

Behavioral Health Dept. receives state honor

The Morrow-Wheeler Behavioral Health Department was selected as the Oregon State Police Department DUII treatment provider of the year.

"This award is presented to an alcohol and/or drug treatment provider who was instrumental in providing, supervising or developing a unique and highly effective treatment program," according to an OSP news release. "Based in eastern Oregon in Heppner, this provider established a motivational

interviewing approach to treatment, including cross-training of all their counselors in both mental health and alcohol dependency. This organization also has an Hispanic counselor and has had a major impact in their region," continued the release.

Awards were presented during a special luncheon in Salem as police officers, prosecutors, treatment providers and traffic safety advocates wrapped up an annual two-day training conference aimed at reducing the impact of impaired driving.

Heel Pain?

Dr. Donald J. Carlson, Foot Specialist will be at the Pioneer Memorial Clinic on April 18th for the diagnosis of this and other foot problems.

Call 676-5504 - Heppner
or 567-8750 - Hermiston