

Easter messages from area pastors

Emboldened

To be a disciple, in Jerusalem, during that first Easter season must have been an incredible "ride." The city would have been filled with all of the pilgrims that had come for the Passover. To add to the excitement there would have been talk of a Rabbi and Prophet from Galilee. Many fantastic stories would have been told of this Prophet. Perhaps they had heard of him raising Lazarus from the dead just a short time before.

As he enters the city the people treat him as a coming king. They anticipate him as the Messiah. One who would throw off the oppression of the Romans and challenge the puppet leaders of Israel. Their hopes are fulfilled as he "cleanses" the Temple of the money changers and speaks parables against the corrupt leaders of the Temple mount.

But their hopes would be dashed. The corrupt leaders had already plotted to kill the prophet. They feared a revolution and were worried that they would lose their positions of power. They convinced one of his own disciples to turn on him. He was arrested, illegally tried in a kangaroo court, convicted and brutally beaten and crucified. Their hope of a new king crushed, the leading disciples of his movement feared for their lives and abandoned him. The entrenched corrupt leadership must have thought that, yes, the loss of one man was well worth allowing them to keep their position.

But then reports began to trickle in... Guards with fantastic stories of angels and empty tombs, people all around the city who witnessed this prophet alive. His disciples became bold and no longer fearful. They began to preach that this was the resurrection and this prophet, Jesus, was the Messiah. These disciples no longer feared the corrupt leaders and told them so, right to their face. It started a movement of the advancement of the Kingdom of God that continues to transform to this day. It is amazing what people can do when they are empowered by God and no longer fear death...

That story seems so long ago. But our lives today can be just as transformed and exciting, just as bold, and not fearful of death if we are empowered by the Spirit of the resurrected Messiah Jesus. Check it out. You will become alive, because He is alive.

Pastor Keith Price
Willow Creek Baptist Church

The Savior Lives

Among the most cherished thoughts and writings in this world is the divine statement of truth: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

This precious Son, our Lord and Savior, atoned for the sins of all mankind. That memorable night in Gethsemane His suffering was so great, His anguish so consuming, that He pleaded, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." Later, on the cruel cross, He died that we might live, and live everlastingly. Resurrection morning was preceded by pain, by suffering in accordance with the divine plan of God. Before Easter, there had to be a cross. The world has witnessed no greater gift, nor has it known more lasting love.

The message of Easter is that the Savior lives! And because He lives all shall indeed live again. This knowledge provides the peace for loved ones of those who have passed on, "Oh, sweet the joy this sentence gives: 'I know that my Redeemer lives!'"

-The First Presidency of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

As members of the Willow Creek Branch of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints we add our testimony to the message shared by our prophet and apostles that Christ lived and died for all mankind and that he is our perfect example in all things.

President Dieter Waite
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

What If

What if Jesus hadn't been crucified? What if he died in his sleep after a long and successful ministry, and then was resurrected? Would Christianity be the same religion? Think about it. We would still have Jesus' teachings and miracles, and we would still have the witness of the risen Christ, pointing us to eternity. Isn't that enough?

No, it isn't, because the crucifixion is as important as the resurrection. The cross represents Jesus' choice to confront fear in the world: fear of love, fear of mercy, fear of generosity, fear of acceptance—all the fears that manifest in hatred, oppression and violence. The overwhelming message of Jesus' ministry was to not be afraid, but instead to be confident in the kingdom come and the kingdom among us now. A long and peaceful ministry was not even possible, because he was such a threat to the powers of this world.

The cross is also the symbol of God's courageous spirit that we are called to hold as our own. The cross teaches that God's love is not about compromise, complacency, or complicity. "You shall know the truth," he said, "and the truth will make you free." Free from what? From fear and the tyrannies of this world. Fear to live and yes, to die, knowing that we are embraced by God now and always. Jesus turned toward Jerusalem knowing he would be killed. But it was the place to speak truth to power, and he did it to set us free.

Without the cross, we would still know Jesus as a brilliant teacher and healer, and someone who could even overcome death. But through his suffering and unjust death, we are offered so much more. "In the world you will have tribulation," he promised, "but do not fear. I have overcome the world."

Hallelujah.
Maundy Thursday services at Valby are at 7 p.m.; the Easter service begins at 9 a.m. with breakfast to follow. Everyone is welcome.

Rev. Lea Mathieu
Valby Lutheran Church

Easter Grace

When I saw the announcement in last week's issue, I wondered how long the Gazette-Times had been offering local pastors the opportunity to submit an Easter message. Upon checking with April, I learned that such an opportunity has been extended at least as long as she and Dave have owned the paper, which has been 31 years. For 31 years, you, the readers of the Gazette-Times, have received the thoughts from area pastors on what Easter means to them. I wonder, how have their messages affected you? Do you read them and say, "That's nice"? Or have you sought to learn more?

The message of Easter is that Jesus of Nazareth died the death that we all will experience. And He overcame this death and is alive forevermore! Furthermore, Jesus has promised that all those who receive God's gift of faith—faith that God is our Creator; and that Jesus is the Son of God; and that the Holy Spirit is the divine presence in our lives—will also receive eternal life. Each one will live forever in the presence of God.

Easter is the revelation of God's grace. Grace to cover all our needs. Grace through forgiveness to cover all of our sins. Grace of the living presence of Jesus, the Christ.

I invite you to come and see; to come and hear the grace of Easter at the ecumenical Easter sunrise service at the football grandstands this Sunday at 7 a.m., or our worship service at the corner of Gale and Church, 193 W. Church Street, at 10:30 a.m.

Pastor Jonathan Enz
United Methodist Church

Annual Elks Easter egg hunt this Saturday

The annual Elks Easter Egg Hunt is on Saturday, April 23 at 10 a.m. The hunt is open to all children from pre-school through the fourth grade.

Pre-schoolers are at the City Park by the museum, 1st-2nd graders are at the "Lower Field" by the grade school and the 3rd-4th graders are at Hager Park.

Hunting for New Life

Like most children, I always loved a good Easter egg hunt. My extended family would traditionally get together after church on Easter Sunday and the teenagers and adults would hide the eggs for those of us who hunted them. I especially loved finding the hard-to-locate Easter eggs. As a teenager, I hid the eggs for my smaller cousins and always enjoyed watching them hunt for eggs as well. When I was a young adult, our family sort of ran out of little children for a few years. My cousins had become teenagers and my sister and I were not ready to have children yet. I remember gathering with my family one year and realizing that we had all dyed Easter eggs but had no small children to hunt for them. In a stroke of brilliance, my father and uncle decided that we should break up into teams and hide the eggs for one another. It was one of the most fun and memorable Easters of my adult life. I remember seeing a look of absolute delight on my grandmother's face, a woman who was not prone to delight, when she found the last egg on her team's hunt. My five teenage cousins even came out of their "too cool" fog for a few moments to remember the joy of finding a well-hidden Easter egg.

The egg was originally a pagan symbol of new life, but was adopted early on in Christian history as a symbol of Christ's resurrection, another form of new life. Easter is about finding new life. As we head into this Easter season, some new life is easy to find. Like any good Easter egg hunt, some are easy to find and others are a bit more difficult. The daffodils and tulips popping up all over are obvious signs. The trees have started blooming and the birds are more abundant. The wheat fields are green and growing. New life is evident in nature all around us. But just like a good Easter egg hunt, some are harder to find. One of my closest friends miscarried twins a few weeks ago. I've been talking with her more frequently; as time has passed and she has started to heal slightly, I can see that she is on the hunt for new life. She is working to understand what this life is like after experiencing such a tragedy. While she will always be grieved by the loss of her children, she is beginning to remember that there is life to live now.

Sometimes new life is easy to see, other times it is much more difficult. During this Easter season, I invite you on a life hunt. Hunt for new life all around you. Find it in the easy to see places, but also look hard to find it in the more difficult situations you face. The resurrected Christ is all around us. May you be blessed with an abundant hunt.

Pastor Stacy Shelton
Ione Community Church

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Area churches to hold Easter services

Hope Lutheran, All Saints Episcopal there will be an Easter-egg hunt after the service.

All Saints Episcopal Church, Hope Lutheran Church, and the United Methodist Church will join together for a Good Friday Tenebrae Service at All Saints on April 22 beginning at 7 p.m.

On Sunday, Hope and All Saints will celebrate Easter at Hope with worship beginning at 10 a.m. The service will include Holy Communion and Easter hymns accompanied by brass and organ. Everyone is invited to bring a fresh flower to add to a special Easter cross in the sanctuary. Children who have attended First Fridays will receive a special gift, and

Everyone is welcome.
Valby Lutheran Maundy Thursday services at Valby are at 7 p.m.; the Easter service begins at 9 a.m. with breakfast to follow. Everyone is welcome.
St Patrick's Holy Week Holy Thursday: 7 p.m., Mass of the Institution of the Blessed Eucharist
Good Friday: 12:05 p.m., Stations of the Cross.
7 p.m., Solemn Commemoration of the Suffering and Death of Jesus

Holy Saturday: 7:30 p.m., Easter Vigil-Service of Light, Easter Proclamation, Liturgy of the Word, Renewal of Baptismal Promises and Celebration of the Eucharist.

Easter Sunday: 11 a.m., Easter Mass
St. William's Good Friday: 5:30 p.m., Stations of the Cross
Easter Sunday: 8:45 a.m., Easter Mass
United Methodist Church Easter worship service at 10:30 a.m.

"Now could be a very good time to buy a home"



Depending on your situation, now could be a very good time to buy a new home. We can help with a mortgage loan that you can live with. Our loan officers know the local market. We have several different loan options. We can help you determine which one is best for your situation. See us today. We're an equal housing lender.

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Hometown People Hometown Spirit

Congratulations to Jason Hanna, Morrow County Grain Growers employee of the quarter. Jason has been with MCGG for over a year at our Lexington Parts Department. Morrow County Grain Growers thanks Jason and wishes to congratulate him for his hard work and excellent customer service skills.

Good Job Jason!!

Lexington 989-8221 • 1-800-452-7396

ROAD WORK AHEAD

The upcoming project with the cooperation with Oregon Forest Highway Program and Morrow County, will be working mid May continuing into June on a 20 mile chip seal preservation project on the Willow Creek Road #678. Some delays will be expected. Morrow County Road dept. would like to remind all motorists that with any road maintenance project to be aware of the workers. Watch for signs, flags and work-zone employees and equipment. Morrow County's goal is to provide a safe roadway. However, it is always up to the motorist to drive according to conditions. Be patient and plan ahead. Leave early if you know you will be driving through work zones. Please use extreme caution and common sense. They will do their best and would appreciate your patience. Again be prepared and be safe. Questions or concerns may be addressed 541-989-9500.