

## Messages of Easter inspiration...

### "A little further"

Picture, if you will, a huge hall, perhaps a theater of some sort. There is a crowd there but it is strangely quiet, almost like they are in fear or mourning. From a distance you can just barely hear the clattering of some someone running and some yelling. As the footfalls draw closer the yelling gets louder. At last a lone figure appears at the top of the stairs and you hear him yelling, "The enemy has been defeated! The enemy has been defeated!"

As the meaning sinks in, the noise in the hall grows; the cheering becomes almost deafening.

"The enemy has been defeated!" The truth begins to sink in. "The enemy has been defeated! Death could not hold Him!"

Just as he promised, Jesus has risen.

This is the best documented truth in history, yet a lot of the world still resides in that darkened room. Where are you? Are you in the darkened room in mourning or fear, or are you in the thundering crowd celebrating the victory?

We are entering the most significant season on the Christian calendar. Most of the country calls it the Easter season. I still prefer to call it Resurrection Sunday. This is the turning point of all history. Many people will celebrate or honor it by attending a

sunrise service; many others will make it a point to attend a local church for morning worship services. However you choose to honor this day, I am sure most will hear some form of the Easter story, including the common verses and stressing the empty tomb. This year, one verse really took on special significance for me. It actually takes place the night before Jesus is crucified. It takes place in the garden of Gethsemane just prior to Jesus being arrested.

Matthew 26:36-39: "Then Jesus went with his followers to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them, 'Sit here and pray.' Then He told Peter, James, and John to come with him. Jesus began to be troubled. He said to Peter and the other two, 'My Heart is troubled and breaking, stay here with me and pray.' Then Jesus walked a little farther away from them, he fell down and prayed..." (NCV).

What a powerful picture, what a powerful invitation. Jesus invited his closest friends to come a little further, to share a little deeper.

"And He went on a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed..." (KJV).

Have you ever felt God calling you "a little further" with Him? It is those times when He is connecting with

you so personally and so deeply, and gently calling you to go further in your relationship with Him.

These places of "further still with God" are places where it's just you and Him as He beckons you to step into deeper levels of intimacy and trust. As you pray and search His scriptures, you listen for and hear His still, small voice. During these "further still" seasons with God, He matures your faith, broadens your trust, and reveals intimate treasures from His heart to yours. It's a beautiful time when you crave less of the world and more of Him.

I have been in one of those "a little further" seasons with God recently. He has called me out of my comfort zone into unfamiliar places. I have to trust that these places are prepared and safe or he would not be calling me there. Just as He required bravery of Joshua in the Old Testament, He calls us to bravely trust Him, too.

During this time, He has also been calling me to lift my head and fix my eyes upon Him alone. My wife lovingly gives advice and insight to me, and fellow Christians pray on my behalf. I am so thankful for my family and friends, yet I know that as God calls me "further still," I am the one who has to continue stepping forward with confidence in Him. No

one can do that for me. He reminds me to look to Him alone, to please Him and not people.

You see, when it is only God and you, you are more apt to face your pride and your sins. With everyone else, we argue these things away and look wonderful and smile. But when we are all alone before God, we face ourselves, and cleansing will take place. We become less phony the more we are with the Lord.

Is God calling you "a little further" today? Our Heavenly Father is completely faithful and entirely trustworthy. He is standing with His strong and loving arms opened wide asking you to take steps of faith in your walk with Him. Though the place you step may be unfamiliar, remember He has gone before you. He wants you to see more of Him - His flawless character and His amazing love. He has a heart full of treasures to unearth for you.

If He is beckoning you to go "a little further" with Him, prayerfully trust Him as He leads you forward.

Isaiah 41:13, "For I am the Lord your God, who takes hold of your right hand, and says to you, 'Do not fear, for I will help you'" (NIV).

Kevin L. Hodges  
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Lexington

### The unexpected savior

A couple of months ago, my family was given the sad news that there was a 96 percent chance that my father had cancer for the second time. This was obviously unwelcome news, and my family began making both mental and physical preparations for this. Last week I went down to southern California to spend time with my folks before my dad began his chemotherapy. While I was there, the most unlikely thing happened. We found out that my dad, in fact, did not have cancer. While it was the most welcome of news, it took us a while to adjust the way we had been thinking for the last couple of months. All of a sudden, the future looked completely different.

As I have spent time with the Easter story this year, I can't help but wonder if Jesus' followers had a similar kind of experience. They were all plugging along fine, when suddenly Jesus was taken from them. The man they were beginning to understand as the savior of their world was suddenly dying a painful and humiliating death. Je-

sus' followers must have spent those days in grief and sorrow, not only for the loss of their friend, but also the loss of their belief that he had come to save them.

And possibly, just as they were moving from denial to acceptance, Easter morning arrived. And once again they had to readjust their expectations. All of a sudden, their future looked completely different.

This is the way of the Christ story. Christ always shows up on his own terms. Every time we think we know how the savior is going to show up, we are surprised. From the baby born in a stable to the man who died on a cross, Christ is always in the least expected places.

For us it may be a beautiful sunrise, the sound of baby chicks, the joy in a child's face, a conversation with a stranger or a surprise cancer-free diagnosis. The risen Christ is all around us, and this Easter my prayer is that we each will take the opportunity to greet and welcome him.

Pastor Stacy Shelton  
Ione Community Church

### Community lunch menu

Hope Lutheran, Valby Lutheran and All Saints Episcopal church members will be serving lunch on Wednesday, April 11 at St. Patrick's Senior Center.

The meal will include Swedish meatballs, mashed potatoes, green beans, sliced tomatoes, hot rolls and orange pudding. Milk is served at each meal.

Suggested donation is \$3.50 per meal. Menu is subject to change.

### Planning approves new hunting preserves

The Morrow County Planning Commission last week approved two new bird hunting preserves as part of the existing Ruggs

Ranch operation.

One of the new hunting areas will be eight miles north of Ruggs on

Rhea Creek Road; the other is about five miles east of Heppner off Highway 74.

Ruggs Ranch oper-

ates a bird hunting preserve at Ruggs; the new ground will be part of that business.

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Paid for by Yes For Kids Committee