



From the desert to the resurrection

In the holy season of Lent, the Church sets out once again on the path leading to Easter. With Jesus as her guide, and walking in his footsteps, she invites us to cross the desert. The history of salvation has given the desert a profound religious meaning. Under the leadership of Moses and later, enlightened by other Prophets, the Chosen People were able, amid deprivations and sufferings, to experience God's faithful presence and his mercy. They fed upon the bread which came down from heaven and quenched their thirst with the water which sprang from the rock. The People of God grew in faith and in hope for the coming of the Messiah who would redeem them.

It was also in the desert that John the Baptist preached, and the crowds came to him in order to receive, in the waters of the Jordan, baptism of repentance. The desert was the place for a conversion aimed at welcoming the One who comes to triumph over the sorrow and death which are the wages of sin. Jesus, the Messiah of the poor whom he fills with good things (Lk. 1:53), began his mission by becoming like those who are hungry and thirsty in the desert.

These Lenten days helped us to meditate upon the word of life which Christ left to his Church in order to enlighten the journey of each of her members. Recognize the voice of Jesus who speaks to you, especially during this Lenten season, in the Gospel, in the liturgical celebrations, with the encouragement of your pastors. Listen to the voice of Jesus who, tired and thirsty, says to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well: "Give me a drink" (Jn. 4:7). Look upon Jesus nailed to the Cross, dying, and listen to his faint voice: "I thirst" (Jn. 19:28). Today, Christ repeats his request and relives the torments of his Passion in all of us.

"But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ." (1 Cor. 15:20-22)

In fact, Christ has been raised from the dead! He was not only raised from the dead to prove to us that He is God; He was raised to prove to us that "We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?'" (1 Cor. 15:52-55; Is. 25:8)

My dear friends in Christ, the glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, witnessed by hundreds in the early days of the Church, is our proof that one day we will all be united as one eternal family. This life is temporary. What awaits us is so much better and greater. Until we reach that day, let us live the joy of Easter with all our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us make a special effort to reach out to those who do not share in our joy and especially those who have been forgotten so they may manifest their joy outwardly as we are doing today. As of today, may you all go forth in the Spirit of Christ and bring the joy of the Lord to all those who touch your lives! Halleluia! He is Risen!

Wishing you a blessed and joyful Easter,

Rev. Kumar Udagandla.

St. Patrick's and St. William's Catholic churches, Heppner and Ione

Easter messages of faith and hope from local ministers

Encounter the risen Christ

If you find the resurrection hard to believe, you're in good company. No one believed it at first. Everyone doubted, and the first reaction to the empty tomb was fear and confusion, not faith.

But something changed. The followers of Jesus had an encounter with their risen Lord. He appeared to them. He spoke with them. He ate with them. They experienced a living Jesus, and it changed them.

But that was a long time ago. We live in a time when all things religious are too often met with skepticism. Among many, Christianity has developed a reputation for hypocrisy and narrow-mindedness and little ability to walk the talk in any consistent way. How can we believe that Jesus rose when those who now claim to be his followers seem so unlike him so much of the time? And we live in a time when scientific evidence and cold hard facts shape our thinking. How can we believe that Jesus rose when there was no trail cam on site to prove it?

And why would we want to? Because to believe in Jesus is to know that you are loved. Period. No matter who you are or what you've done.

Admittedly, believing that Jesus rose can be tough. It means searching for facts and opinions and right answers. Believing in Jesus, on the other hand, is built on trust—trusting that Jesus' victory over death really does show us just how much God loves us, and to what great lengths God will go to set us free from fear and sin and hopelessness. Opinion is rarely life-changing. Trust is life-giving. And trust can be built through experience.

The good news is that it's still possible to experience the living Jesus for yourself—through scripture, prayer, worship, service to others, and a deepening relationship with a community of believers who are unafraid to share their stories about all the ways God has been at work in their lives. And you can sometimes still find those things all assembled in one place: a church.

This Easter, take a risk and go in search of an experience with our resurrected Jesus. Find your way into a church. There, in that gathering of sinners and saints, the faithful and those still struggling with doubt, you just might be in the right place to have an encounter with the living Jesus. It could change you forever.

Pastor Katy Anderson

Hope Lutheran Church & All Saints Episcopal Church

The road Christ walked to be with us

During Lent this year, our congregation used a devotional book called *Lent for Everyone* by N.T. Wright. It is a study of the book of Matthew, and I have enjoyed it a great deal. What I was reminded of as we progressed through the story of Christ this year was how difficult the journey was for Jesus. He goes through a multitude of confrontations, deals with stubborn and thick disciples, has friends who doubt him, and that doesn't even scratch the surface of the difficult cultural situation he was born into, or the really hard part of the final journey to cross.

When we think of Christ as Emmanuel, or 'God with us,' and think about how difficult Jesus' life really was, it is amazing that God wants to be with us that bad. There had to have been a few million shortcuts God could have taken to avoid all of those difficulties, and yet God came to be with us in the form of a subservient man who was willing to be in relationship with us even in the midst of our flaws and foibles.

And that is but one of the miracles of Easter. As we come to the day when we celebrate the living Christ, who overcomes death and lives again, may we be reminded that the same Christ longs to be with us, exactly where and as we are, even while calling us to move and become our full selves.

My prayer is that your Easter is a season that is filled with love and wonder.

Pastor Stacey Shelton

Ione Community Church

Easter sunrise service planned in Heppner

The South Morrow Service at the Morrow County Ministerial County Fairgrounds at 7 a.m. Easter morning, April 20. All are welcome.

Saved by the blood of the lamb

Happy Easter! Many people I know say Happy Resurrection day. That's because they want to make sure people know what they mean when they give people a greeting on Easter. Easter is the day we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

In the Bible, in Exodus, it tells about when God was preparing to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. He sent 10 plagues because Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, did not want to let the Israelites leave. The last plague was the death of the firstborn of every family, even including the livestock. The only way for this not to happen was to put blood from a sacrificed lamb on your doorpost. In Exodus 12:24 it says, "For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you." They were saved by the blood of a lamb.

So it is with Jesus' sacrifice on the cross; we are saved by the blood of the lamb, the perfect lamb. Because Jesus died on the cross for our sins and was resurrected, our sins are covered by His perfect sacrifice. On that first Easter morning some of Jesus' followers went to the tomb where Jesus body had been taken after He died on the cross. Mark 16:3-6 says, "And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is Risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him.'"

Christian author and speaker Max Lacado wrote in one of his books that, when he was reading about Jesus resurrection, it occurred to him that the stone was not rolled away for Jesus to get out—Jesus didn't need any help getting out—it was for us to look in and see that He had risen. I hope as you celebrate Easter you remember the sacrifice of Jesus and how the blood of the lamb (Jesus) covers the sin of those who choose to follow Him.

Happy Resurrection Day!

Pastor Lloyd Love,

Heppner Christian Church

Move over, Easter Bunny



These Jacob sheep lambs owned by Dan and Sandra Van Liew present a living—and lively—picture of the Easter season as they graze on the hill overlooking Heppner. —Photo by Sandra Van Liew

Holy Week and Easter Services

A few of the community's churches have planned extra services for the coming week. Following are those schedules submitted to the Gazette-Times:

Community Sunrise Service
7 a.m. Easter morning, April 20, at the Morrow County Fairgrounds

St. Patrick's Catholic Church

Thursday, April 17, Mass of the Lord's Supper, 5 p.m. with adoration until midnight

Friday, April 18, Praying the Stations of the Cross, noon

Passion of the Lord service, 7 p.m.

Saturday, April 19, Easter Vigil, Mass, 7 p.m.

Sunday, April 20, Easter Day Mass, 11 a.m.

Shared Ministry of Hope Lutheran and All Saints Episcopal

Monday through Wednesday of Holy Week, Evening Prayer will be offered at All Saints at 5:30 p.m. nightly.

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday services will be held jointly with the United Methodist Church:

Thursday, April 17, Maundy Thursday service at All Saints, 7 p.m.

Friday, April 18, Good Friday service at the Methodist Church, 7 p.m.

Sunday, April 20, Easter breakfast at All Saints, 8-9:30 a.m.

Easter services at All Saints, 10 a.m.



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