



# Messages of Easter hope from local pastors

## An Earth-Shaking Event

The resurrection of Jesus was an event of seismic proportions. The ground had already begun shaking the previous Sunday, when Jesus rode into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. He was hailed as a conquering hero (although he hardly looked the part) and greeted with palm branches and shouts of “Hosanna!”—the ancient equivalent of a ticker-tape parade. The Gospel of Matthew says the whole city was shaken, stirred up, moved, or in turmoil (depending on how you translate Matthew’s original choice of words for the uproar that followed).

By Friday, the cheers had turned to boos and hisses, and the earth began shaking again as nails were driven into the hands and feet of an innocent victim. Lifted up on a cross, crowned with thorns, Jesus was scorned by those who had orchestrated his death. Only a few faithful women watched the horror unfold; the rest of his followers had vanished. Matthew tells us that at the moment Jesus breathed his last, the earth shook, rocks split, and the temple curtain was torn top to bottom in an earthquake that even terrified the Roman guards into admitting that “Truly this man was God’s Son”—a title exclusively reserved for their emperor.

On Sunday morning, the ground shook yet again, and in this earthquake, the stone rolled in front of Jesus’ tomb was thrust aside to reveal...nothing! The dead body of Jesus was no longer there, because Jesus was no longer dead. This discovery sent shockwaves through the women who had come to the tomb to grieve, but would instead meet a living Jesus whose first words to them were, “Do not be afraid.”

... as if three earth-rattling events in a week’s time is normal! Of course they were afraid—afraid that this was a trick; afraid that it wasn’t; afraid that no one would believe they’d seen Jesus alive. But fear was not all they felt. According to Matthew, the women left the tomb “with fear and great joy.” Jesus had spoken the truth. He had promised to rise again in three days and he did. And if that’s true—since that’s true—then everything Jesus said about himself and his Father’s love for us is trustworthy and true as well. There are blessings for the meek and the merciful. The weary can come to him for rest. God’s forgiveness has no limits, and neither should ours. Love for God and neighbor is more important than anything else.

Jesus lives. This truth still has the power to shake loose any fear or doubt that’s been holding us back, and set us free to trust and love and experience the abundant life Jesus offers as a gift—costly for him; free for us. The earth may even shake beneath your feet for a moment when God hears you say “Yes! That’s a gift I want to claim as my own.”

*Rev. Katy Anderson  
Hopeful Saints Ministry  
All Saints Episcopal & Hope Lutheran*

## One Act of Obedience

Have you ever stopped and wondered if one decision can impact the course of history? Can a decision to turn left instead of right at a stop sign really make that much difference? If I eat eggs instead of pancakes for breakfast, will the universe unravel? Perhaps there is more weight to decisions than we realize.

There was one decision, one act of obedience, which forever changed the course of history. That act is recorded in the Bible in Mark Chapter 14, verse 36. In that moment in time, Jesus is presented with the choice to either go to the cross and die or to rebel and live.

If Jesus takes the path of life and avoids the cross, an instrument of suffering and death, the plan of God to forever deal with sin cannot be completed. On the other hand, if Jesus takes the path to the cross, He will endure a level of suffering no one has ever known, but accomplish redemption for all humankind. Truly, an impossible decision on which at that moment the fate of the world hung.

Of course, we know Jesus chose the cross. He chose to have all of the justified, holy wrath of God poured out on Him. He chose to have God punish all evil and all wrongdoing on Him the day that He was crucified. Without being forced to, He willingly allowed nails to be driven into His body, pinning Him to wooden beams to hang suspended in the air from until He was dead. Why would anyone make such a gruesome choice?

By choosing the cross, Jesus allowed the Father to pour out all the consequences for evil on Him instead of on you and me. He took upon Himself all the pain and torture we should have received. Evil had to be paid for. Justice had to be done. The character of God as a good, loving, just person depended on balancing of the scales of justice.

When Jesus made the decision to obey and go to the cross, Jesus stood in for you. He subbed Himself in for you. He took our place on the cross. It is done, it is finished, and it is history. However, decisions to alter history do not end there.

Just as Jesus made the decision to make a way for your sin (wrongdoing) to be erased and forgiven, you must make a decision as well. What Jesus did is only effective if you choose to accept it. You must believe and accept what Jesus has done for you. You can say, “No thank you, I will pay for my sin myself,” and face the deserved consequences for your wrongdoing, or you can say, “Thank you Jesus, I accept what you have done for me.”

Whatever choice you make will alter the course of history for you forever. What decision will you make?  
*Pastor Tripp Finch  
Willow Creek Baptist Church*

## Loop committee to meet

The Loop Morrow County Transportation advisory committee will meet April 18 at 3 p.m. in the Bartholomew Building in Heppner.

Agenda items to include but are not limited to approval of the January 31, 2017 minutes, ridership numbers, state agreement, committee appointment and other items for the good of the order.

## The Meaning of the Holy Week

**Palm Sunday (April 9) - Holy Saturday (April 15)**

Holy Week is most definitely a very sacred time of the year, for it is now that we will commemorate and remember the last week of Jesus’ life on this earth. These are the days leading up to the great Easter Feast. The Lenten season of sacrifice and self-denial is about to come to an end, but this coming week is extremely important for all Christians. The greatest focus of the week is the Passion (suffering) and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the events that led up to it.

Historical documents tell us that as early as the fourth century the Church celebrated this “Great Week” with a feeling of profound sanctity. It begins with Palm Sunday, which marks Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem. The central feature of the service proper to this day, as it was in the earliest times, is the procession of palms. The palms are blessed and are then borne in procession to the church, where an entry is made with a certain amount of ceremony, after which the Mass is celebrated. The other notable and very ancient feature of the present Palm Sunday service is the reading of the Gospel of the Passion by three readers.

Especially important for Catholics is the Easter Triduum. This is the three days just before Easter. On Holy Thursday, we reenact the Lord’s Last Supper, which He shared with His apostles on the night He was betrayed and arrested. This is one of the most beautiful liturgies of the entire liturgical year. At the Mass, the priest will wash the feet of twelve men, just as Jesus did. Also on this night, priests all over the world will renew their sacred vows. This is because, at the Last Supper, Jesus not only instituted the Mass (Eucharist) but also the ministerial priesthood.

On Good Friday, the day of the crucifixion and death of our Lord, we have the veneration of the Cross. A service is held at three o’clock in the afternoon (the hour He is believed to have died) and another later in the evening. We go forward and kiss the Cross in order to show honor and respect for Christ’s sacrifice for our sake. There is no consecration of the Eucharist on this day, and the Communion we receive will be from the night before, which has been reserved in the tabernacle.

Holy Saturday is a vigil. We keep watch for the expectant rising of Our Savior. This was the day He went down into the netherworld in order to bring back up with Him into heaven those who had died before His coming. Up to this time, the gates to heaven were closed and no one could go there because of the original sin of Adam. Jesus changed all that. By paying the price for our sins on the Cross, He gained for us our eternal salvation, and heaven was opened once more.

Also on this night, persons who have spent months of preparation will be received through Baptism and Confirmation into the Catholic Church for the first time. It is a joyous occasion.

Those who engage themselves wholeheartedly in living the entire paschal cycle (Lent, Triduum and Easter’s Fifty Days) discover that it can change them forever. This is especially so of the Triduum which, standing at the heart of the Easter season, is an intense immersion in the fundamental mystery of what it is to be Christian. During these days, we suffer with Christ so that we might rise with Him at His glorious Resurrection. Holy Week is a time to clear our schedules of unnecessary activities. Our minds and hearts should be fixed on Jesus and what He did for us. Let us bear the Cross so that may be worthy of wearing the crown He wore.

**Easter Sunday (April 16):**

The Lord Is Risen, Alleluia! Alleluia!

So, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, let us live in Joy of Easter with all our friends in Christ and make our special efforts to reach out to those who don’t know about Christ, so that they may know Jesus and manifest their joy outwardly as we are doing today. We shall live in faith in Jesus Christ that He is truly risen from the dead and bring Joy to the whole world.

Wishing you a blessed and joyful Easter,

*Rev. Fr. Papa Rao Pasala*

*St. Patrick’s & St. William’s Catholic churches, Heppner & Ione*

## Holy Week Services

A community Sunrise Service will be held at the football stands at the fairgrounds on Easter morning, April 16, at 7 a.m.

Other local services planned for this week are:

**Willow Creek Baptist Church**

April 16, Easter morning worship, 10:45 a.m.

**Hopeful Saints (All Saints Episcopal/Hope Lutheran)**

April 12, Wednesday Evening Prayer, All Saints, 6 p.m.

April 13, Maundy Thursday worship with communion at Hope at 6 p.m., followed by a simple agape meal

April 14, Good Friday worship following the Way of the Cross at All Saints at 6 p.m.

April 16, Easter Sunday festival worship at Hope at 10 a.m. with baptisms and communion, preceded by breakfast from 8:30-9:30 and followed by an egg hunt.

**St. Patrick’s Catholic Parish:**

April 13, Holy Thursday Mass, 7 p.m.

April 14, Good Friday Passion of the Lord, 7 p.m.

April 16, Easter Sunday Mass, 11 a.m.

**St. William’s Catholic Church**

April 16, Easter Sunday Mass, 8:45 a.m.

**Heppner Christian Church**

April 14, multi-church Good Friday service, 7 p.m. An offering will be taken for the Neighborhood Center.

April 16, Easter morning worship at 10:45 a.m., preceded by breakfast from 8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

## Park district to meet

Willow Creek Park District will have a regular board meeting Monday, April 17, at 5:15 p.m. at Heppner City Hall. The public is invited.

## New Beginnings

Easter has a different meaning to people. To some it means the beginning of their Spring Break, so it is about a vacation somewhere warm. For others, especially this year, it means time to head to the slopes for some late skiing. Others can only think of colored eggs and hiding them for their children and grandchildren to hunt and find.

Easter is often beginning or continuing on with family traditions. Families will travel many miles to gather for lunch, Easter egg hunts, and family time together. They will be concerned over whether or not the ham is cooked right, favorite pies are prepared and if there are enough eggs for the children to find. Unfortunately the meaning and reason for Easter can get lost in all the busy-ness of the day.

As a child growing up, Easter was maybe my favorite holiday. I knew that the Easter meant that spring had finally arrived, bringing with it baseball and the Masters golf tournament. I also knew that our home would be full of family and friends. There would be more food on the table than we could eat and after lunch all of us kids would be hunting eggs on the two acres we owned. There would probably be a stranger or two at the table as Mom would make sure that no one was having Easter alone if she could help it. Ask my daughters and they would tell you that Easter at grandmas was their favorite holiday too.

But that is not what Easter is about either. Easter means new beginnings. Winter is over and the earth comes back to life. Daffodils grow and bloom and the trees put on their blossoms, the winter wheat is turning the fields green and the alfalfa will be ready for its first cutting soon. Easter signifies new beginnings and hope.

In a world filled with violence, hatred and despair the one thing all of humanity needs is hope and that is what Easter tells us. Hope because the tomb where Jesus was laid after his death on the cross was found to be empty. Hope because the one who came to rescue us from the punishment for our sin overcame that punishment, death. Hope because we have more to look forward to than just this life, these few short years on earth. We have the hope and promise of eternal life through Jesus the savior of the world.

As the Don Francisco song tells us “He is Alive.” So enjoy your family, color and search for those eggs, and make memories with your families. But do not lose sight of what Easter is all about.

The tomb is empty; He is alive!

*Pastor Ray DeLoe*

*Heppner Christian Church*

## Christian church plans Easter breakfast

Heppner Christian Church invites the community to an Easter breakfast planned for April 16 from 8-9:30 a.m. at the church, located at 293 N. Gale St. in Heppner. Breakfast will include pancakes, eggs cooked to order, sausage and drinks. Donations made for the breakfast will go to Hope 2 Liberia.

## OTLD branches closed next week

The Boardman, Irrigon and Heppner branches of the Oregon Trail Library District will be closed April 18-22 so staff can attend the state library conference in Salem.

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