

An Easter Meditation

Of all the celebrations Christians are involved in, Easter has to be the most important. It is certain that during the Passover of the Jews, Jesus of Nazareth at the age of 33 died on a Roman cross, just outside the city of Jerusalem, almost 2,000 years ago. In three days, He arose from the dead with more evidence than we have of the entire existence of Julius Caesar. Long live the King of Kings!

This past week my brother came down to visit Mom and we stood in her living room looking at the picture of the two of us in our Easter outfits with matching zipper Bibles on Easter, 1957. It was a much simpler time. In those days we all dressed up. Our Bibles were King James, going to church was never an option and Easter eggs, bunnies and candy were all highly peripheral compared to the worship we gave to Jesus on this wonderful day called Easter. I sometimes long to return to the America I remember in the mid 20th century. Yet the Bible says, *"For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption"* (Acts 13:36). Every one of us are allotted a generation to serve God. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, *"To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."* We all have our time and God has assigned to every one of His children in every generation a purpose. Knowing that these words may survive me, I leave these Easter meditations with my children and the flock God has given me the privilege to pastor these many years.

1. Our Lord who died for us should be lived for with total abandonment.

The most life-changing thoughts to have ever entered this frail, human brain of mine are the thoughts of the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The Bible says in Galatians 2:20, *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."* For most of my life this verse has held me captive with reverent ramifications. Think of what the apostle is saying! Paul is so challenged by the exchange of Christ's life for his on Calvary that he never gets beyond it. He pictures himself dying with Christ, being buried with Christ and rising from the dead with Christ. Listen to what he says in Romans 6:5 and 6, *"For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin."* He was so into Calvary and the cross was so into him that he said, *"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"* (I Corinthians 2:2).

Calvary is intended to bring us to Christ in complete surrender and abandonment. Christianity was never designed to be an addendum to an already full life. God intends us to empty ourselves of ourselves and this world and give ourselves completely over to him.

When the famed Evangelist Wilbur Chapman was dying, one of his friends was standing by his bedside weeping. Chapman had the strength to look at his old friend and say, "Don't cry for me; I died twenty-two years ago." In other words since he was saved and surrendered to the Lord, he was a "dead-man-walking," and it was not he but Christ who lived within Him, calling the shots, leading in every decision, making the sacrifice necessary and doing whatever it takes to advance the cause of Christ in this world.

2. Never forsake the cardinal doctrines of the faith.

Stay with the Bible! Don't veer from its pages and paths. In the ancient days Christians were called (even by Muslims), "The People of the Book." Believe every page of this Holy Book called the Bible. *"Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him"* (Proverbs 30:5). Stay with the belief in the Deity of Christ! John said, *"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth"* (John 1:14). Stay with the Gospel! Paul said, *"...I declare unto you the gospel... how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures..."* (I Corinthians 15:1, 3,4). Stay with the blood atonement for our sins! *"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus"* (Romans 3:24-26). Stay with what we celebrate today: the physical, literal, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ! *"And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins"* (I Corinthians 15:17).

3. Stay involved in the local church.

Church attendance is a habit and a very good one at that. When people fall out of church, they too develop a habit, one they will regret for time and eternity if they do not change. The Bible says, *"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen"* (Ephesians 3:21). Being faithful to

church on Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night is like saying, Lord, You have the first day and the middle of the week; You have all there is of me and my house. *"...But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD..."* (Joshua 24:15). *"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence"* (Colossians 1:18). I encourage you to not only attend the House of God but find a need and fill it. Be an active church member.

4. Leave a legacy of honor.

What are you going to leave behind? As the days and years of my life pass, this thought comes to mind: I want to leave a legacy of faithfulness. I want to be faithful to my Lord, my wife, my family, Christchurch and the thousands I have preached to around the world. *"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful"* (I Corinthians 4:1,2). *"As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God"* (I Peter 4:10). The word for "steward" in Greek is οἰκονομος (oikonomos). A steward is one who is assigned as the manager of a household or of household affairs, especially a manager or superintendent to whom the head of the house or proprietor has intrusted the management of his affairs, the care of receipts and expenditures, and the duty of dealing out the proper portion to every servant and even to the children not yet of age. He was also the manager of a farm or landed estate, an overseer or the superintendent of the city's finances, the treasurer of a city (or of treasurers or quaestors of kings). We are given an assignment from the Risen Lord to take care of His business while He is gone. Jesus said, *"...Occupy till I come"* (Luke 19:13). We are to be faithful to the King's great commission, financing His Kingdom work and then to impart His discipleship to the next generation.

-Pastor Pope-