

Easter

THURSDAY March 28, 2024



Hop on these tips for a great Easter egg hunt



STAFF REPORTS

Egg hunts are a traditional component of many people's Easter celebrations. Children often delight in searching for eggs around the house or in the backyard. Egg hunts are so popular that they have become a component of many town-sponsored festivities. In fact, the White House hosts its annual Easter Egg Roll each year.

There are many ways to make Easter egg hunts more enjoyable and productive for participants of all ages. Try these 'eggcellent' ideas.

- Designate a clear hunting area. Young children can grow frustrated searching for eggs in large areas. Set parameters for the search area that are manageable depending on the ages of the children participating. If you'll be in a large yard or field, tape off the search area perimeter.

- Vary the prizes. Candy, candy and more candy seems to be the name of the game on Easter. But too many sweets can lead to stom-

MADELYN EDWARDS | TRI-COUNTY REPORTER

In 2023 Springtown's Hop & Shop event marked the return of the city's Easter egg hunt. Aided by their families, children rushed around to grab as many eggs as possible.

PLEASE SEE **HUNT** | C2

Pondering the life of Christ

TAYLOR TOMLIN

Campus pastor at The WORD@Springtown

As we quickly approach Resurrection Sunday, my thoughts have been continuously on our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. As I prepare for my first Easter Sunday message as a pastor, I will give you a look through the scope of my lens recently. I've been thinking and reflecting often about significant events in Christ's life:

THE BIRTH

Even from birth, there was

PLEASE SEE **LIFE** | C9



Taylor Tomlin with his wife and family.

We are made alive because Jesus told the truth

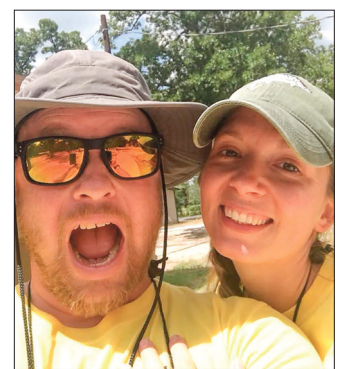
BRANDON GEARY

Pastor, Merge Community Church

I asked Jesus to be my Savior and Lord when I was a freshman in high school in 1994. I can remember the moment I knew of my need for Jesus. I had been going to church for a few months. I was invited to an AWANA event by a friend. Actually, he invited me to come swim at his house, and I asked "will there be girls there?" He said "Yes, but we have to do a little church stuff first." I responded, "Will there be girls there?" He said "Yes." I am pretty

sure I could not have said yes fast enough. That conversation was toward the end of my eighth-grade year and started an adventure with God I had not realized was going to continue to carry me through this very moment.

I started going to youth, which was a mixed bag filled with freshman boys who were promised girls would be there, only to discover it was a bunch of let-down freshman guys who were just invisible in the big pond of high school. But we started to learn about God's love and our need for Jesus. I can re-



Brandon Geary

member the moment I knew I needed him. It was just out-

PLEASE SEE **TRUTH** | C5

How Palm Sunday and Resurrection Sunday both fulfill promises and prophecies

REV. TIMOTHY MCKEOWN

GracePointe Church

The nation of Israel is certainly in the news and also in the hearts and concerns of many of us who have been to the Holy Land. Likewise, at this time of year, many pastors are preaching on the Passover and the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In some years,



Rev. Timothy McKeown

Resurrection Sunday and Passover occur on exactly the same day and even in years like 2024, the two "holy days" are always celebrated within a month of each other.

Jesus and the early Christians, notably the Apostle Paul, observed the Jewish religious feasts, including the feasts of the Unleavened Bread, the Passover, and First Fruits,

the first three feasts on the Jewish calendar. All are intricately interwoven into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

But even before these events, on Palm Sunday, we see Jesus making a "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem. It, too, has a prophetic alignment with prophecies from the Old Testament.

Palm trees have always

been linked with Israel, and were it not for the gospel of John, we would not have even called the Sunday before the Resurrection "Palm Sunday." Only in John 12:13 do we specifically see the people laying down palm branches as they proclaim, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD!" The King of Israel!"

Palm branches symbolize

victory, triumph and peace, as do a king riding on a colt. Both Zechariah 9:9 and 1 Kings 1:33 show that Jesus riding in on a colt symbolically showed that a king had arrived. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming

PLEASE SEE **PROMISES** | C7

Meanings behind the Easter lily

Easter symbols and traditions help make the holiday familiar and special. Eggs, hot cross buns and frilly church dresses help paint the picture, and so does a delicate and beautiful white flower.

The Easter lily plant is native to both Taiwan and the Ryukyu Islands of Japan. The plant's flowering season begins in April and ends in June. The plant produces pure white flowers on top of long stems. Easter lilies often adorn homes and church altars during this time of year.

Tradition states that the Easter lily originated in the Garden of Eden from the teardrops of Eve that spread when she and Adam were cast out of the garden. These were believed to be tears of repentance.

Historians and biblical scholars say that the lily has always been highly regarded in the Christian Church. Jesus even references the flower in Luke 12:27, stating 'Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of

these.' Legend has it that, after Jesus' death and resurrection, lilies were found growing in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus is said to have prayed before his crucifixion. They were believed to have sprung up from a drop of sweat from his brow when his head was bent in prayer.

In Easter celebrations, the lily represents Christ's Resurrection, and thusly new birth and new life. The delicate, white blooms can be viewed as pure, innocent and untainted by the world.

The flower itself is used in various ways to tell the resurrection story. The bulb is buried in the ground as a representation of Christ's tomb. The trumpet-shaped fragrant flowers also announce life after death, since bulbed flowers often regrow year after year, according to the religious resource All About Jesus. And the trumpet shape signifies the angel Gabriel's trumpet call.

It's common for Easter lilies to decorate homes, churches, gardens, and more throughout the Easter season.



In Easter celebrations, the lily represents Christ's Resurrection, and thusly new birth and new life.



HUNT FROM PAGE C1

ach aches for young Easter celebrants. Instead, mix and match the prizes contained in the eggs. Candy can be in some, money in others, and perhaps small toys in a few eggs. Another clever idea is to mix the egg hunt with charades. Put charade prompts

Keep a master list. It can be hard to remember where each egg is hidden, so keep a running list of where they are or take photos with a phone of the hiding spots.

in some eggs so that kids have to act out what they read inside for added fun.

- Special privilege egg. Hide one egg that gives the finder the opportunity for a special honor. It may include getting the first slice of the holiday ham or being able to choose a movie that the entire family watches together after dinner.

- Label eggs for equity. When there are children across a wide range of ages, label the eggs with the children's names or utilize a color-coded system to ensure that everyone has an equal shot at finding eggs.

- Keep a master list. It can

be hard to remember where each egg is hidden, so keep a running list of where they are or take photos with a phone of the hiding spots. This way you're not left to discover a chocolate-filled egg teeming with ants come summertime.

- Make custom baskets. Children will need something to carry their eggs. Prior to the egg hunt, let them decorate bags or baskets with Easter trinkets for custom creations.

Easter egg hunts are a time-honored tradition. The opportunities for fun are endless when families plan accordingly.



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The significance of various symbols of Easter

Easter Sunday is a day when Christians across the globe celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Data from the Pew Research Center indicates there are approximately 2.4 billion Christians across the globe, which accounts for nearly one-third of the global population.

Though certain Christians groups do not celebrate Easter, many consider it the holiest day of the year. Given that significance, it's no surprise Easter is steeped in symbolism. The following are some of the many symbols of Easter and what they represent to faithful Christians across the globe.

EGGS

Eggs might now be more instantly associated with Easter egg hunts for children, but the American Bible Society notes that eggs are symbolic of more than just fun for kids. Eggs represent the new life that's symbolic of spring, which is when Easter occurs in the northern hemisphere. Christians view eggs as a reminder of the resurrection of Jesus. Interestingly, though colored eggs are often seen as a fun Easter activity for kids, the ABS notes that the tradition dates back to the early days of Christianity, when red-colored eggs were used to represent the resurrection.

CRUCIFIX

The crucifix, which is a distinct representation of a cross with Jesus Christ on it, is symbolic of the crucifixion and subsequent resurrection of Jesus. The ABS notes that the resurrection of Jesus symbolizes his victory over the power of sin and death.

THE LAMB

Jesus is referred to in the Bible as the 'Lamb of God' (Revelation 5:6-14), so the lamb is another important Easter symbol for Christians. In addition, in John (1:29), Jesus is referred to by John the Baptist as the 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.'

EASTER BUNNY

Another symbol, like Easter eggs, that people could be forgiven for mistaking as purely secular, the Easter Bunny is not entirely separate from the spiritual meaning of

the holiday. As noted, Easter, even though it's a moveable feast, takes place in spring in the northern hemisphere each year. Spring is symbolic of rebirth, and the hare was a symbol of fertility among the ancient pagans. The spirit of rebirth associated with rabbits, particularly in spring, also is reminiscent of the resurrection of Jesus from his tomb.

Easter is celebrated across the globe. Those celebrations feature many significant religious symbols that have withstood the test of time.



Easter bunnies and eggs symbolize new life, rebirth and fertility.



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DAVID SHAFFER

Dr. David Shaffer and his wife, Daniele, are Azle-area residents. David is director of Son Shine Ministries (equipfamilies.org) and has been a member of the Azle Area Ministerial Alliance since 1985 (azlema.com). david@equipfamilies.org | 817-444-3777

As a child, I remember observing God's creation and marveling at the diversity and complexity. I would look up at the night sky and become overwhelmed by the vastness of our universe.

Even a simple housefly would amaze me. Within hours of entering its adult phase, a fly discovers how to use its wings. It knows how to navigate its flight pattern and instinctively what its purpose is. When I looked around at the varied inhabitants of this world, I knew it was no accident; a Designer existed who is far greater than we are. I knew that God had to be real.

Since God existed, I figured the probability for life beyond death was high. The stories about heaven and hell resonated with me as legitimate. So, I began assessing how I could make it to heaven. I assumed that at the end of my life, God would somehow weigh all the good I had done along with all the bad and determine which was heaviest. If my good out-



David Shaffer

weighed the bad, I reasoned, I would make it into heaven.

With this in mind, I tried to be a good guy. Some days would go well, but I never consistently maintained a pattern of goodness. With my failures came uncertainty. How could I know for sure that I would go to heaven?

The Good News, I found out when I was in the eighth grade, is that we can know with certainty that we will go to heaven. I'll never forget the simple but profound message about salvation I heard at a conference in San Antonio. Let me share with you what hit home with me the night I became a Christian in 1976.

I was told that God loves me and has a plan for my life. Rather than man's wisdom, reasoning or guessing, the

Bible (God's word) was the standard for truth. In John 3:16 (NIV) Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

The speaker explained that sin separates us from God. This is because God is holy, and his standard is perfection. Romans 3:23 makes it clear that "all have sinned." While some seem to sin a lot more than others, the reality is that we have all fallen short. None of us meets God's standard.

I realized the big problem this caused when Romans 6:23 (NIV) was read; it says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." In other words, what I had earned (my wage or payment) for my sin was death. This verse contrasts death with eternal life, so this is an eternal separation from God. That's the ultimate bad news.

God is just, so this penalty for sin must be paid. This rendered my plan of making it to heaven based on good works ineffectual! I realized I could never be good enough to earn a spot in heaven because even one sin separates me from God.

The penalty of my sin rested solely on me unless someone else was willing to pay my penalty of death. I can't imagine anyone volunteering for that, and an obvious problem would be that no one qualifies because we are all sinners. It would take someone who was like me (a human) who never sinned and who was willing to die for me.

As I continued to listen to the speaker, he excitedly stated that Jesus Christ was willing. He paid the price for our sins with his death on the cross.

While on Earth, Jesus was confronted with various temptations but never sinned. He proclaimed, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6, NIV).

His death was full payment for our sins, making it possible to be in relationship forever with God. No one else could have paid that price for us.

Christ's death is not the end of the story. In fact, the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:17 (NLT) that "... if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins."

Fortunately, Christ was

raised! We celebrate Easter to commemorate the reality of the bodily resurrection of Jesus. God the Father demonstrated his power over death by raising his Son, giving hope to all who place their trust in Christ.

If you hear someone say on Easter Sunday, "He is risen," feel free to joyfully respond, "He is risen indeed!"

After listening intently to the speaker, I believed the Gospel (the message of Christ's death and resurrection), and I accepted the precious gift of salvation by trusting in Jesus Christ alone for the forgiveness of my sins. The decision I made years ago changed my life forever.

We are each offered this ultimate gift (eternal life with God) despite what we deserve (eternal separation from God). This is grace. And the Bible says that "... it is by grace you have been saved, through faith..." (Ephesians 2:8, NIV). It also says in John 1:12 (NET), "But to all who have received him — those who believe in his name — he has given the right to become God's children."

You can know with certainty that you're a Christian! If you have never trusted Jesus as your Savior, the invitation

to do so is before you.

If you believe Jesus died for your sins and are ready to place your trust in him for your eternal salvation, you may do so right where you are.

If it helps you, here is a prayer similar to what I prayed when I accepted Christ; feel free to use it, or pray using your own words: "Dear Father, thank you for the love you have for me. I trust in Jesus as my Savior, and I believe that his death on the cross paid the penalty for my sins. Thank you for your forgiveness. I pray this gratefully in the name of Jesus. Amen."

If you have accepted God's gift of grace, you have made the most important decision of your life! If you just did this, I hope you share the great news with your family and friends! I encourage you to nourish your newfound faith by becoming involved at a local Christian church.

If you have made it to the end of this article and are left with unanswered questions, feel free to reach out to me. I would be honored to hear your thoughts and would welcome a conversation.

May God bless and keep you (with certainty) in Jesus' name!

Because of Easter, my hope is not heaven

JOSH TOLLISON

Senior Pastor, Lighthouse Harbor Church, Pelican Bay

Ask someone "What happens to people when they die?" and you may be surprised at the answer you get. "They just die," some will say. "I don't know," say others. But, most often the answer I hear is "They go to heaven."

And that is true, according to the Bible. Whether we call it "heaven," "paradise," or something else, the spirits of Christians who die on this earth go to be with the Lord. In his letter to the



Josh Tollison

Philippians, the Apostle Paul makes this claim explicit; speaking of the possibility of his martyrdom, he says, "My desire is to depart and be with Christ" (Phil. 1:23, ESV, emphasis mine). We see it again in Jesus's words to the thief on the cross, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43, ESV). And these are just two examples among many.

Still, just like the cross is not the end of Jesus' story, neither is heaven the end of ours. Something else happened on Easter morning, two thousand years ago, that

changed everything: Jesus Christ rose from the dead.

The ancient Church in Corinth struggled with the idea of resurrection. It confronted all its philosophical presuppositions and bucked against its understanding of the world. So, in his first letter to them, the Apostle Paul attacks their misunderstandings head on: "If there is no resurrection of the dead," he says, "then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (1 Cor. 15:13-14, ESV). Strong words!

He continues, "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead... But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ" (1 Cor. 15:20-21, 23, ESV). So then, Jesus is the first to rise again, but not the last. And when Christ comes again, all those who belong to him will rise again, too.

That may sound strange to you, but it is thoroughly

Biblical. God made us soul and body, and to lose one or the other is to be incomplete. But the promise of Easter is that death is not the end, and neither is heaven. Because Jesus rose again, our hope is better than that. For all who repent and believe in his name, we are promised that we will live forever — not as bodiless souls in a faraway place, but in new and perfect bodies, raised from death to eternal life, on an Earth made new by a King who defeated death on that first Easter morning.

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**Happy
Easter!**

Why is Easter Sunday such an important Christian holiday?

Christians around the world fill church pews on Easter Sunday to participate in one of the most holy and important celebrations of the liturgical year. Although every Sunday presents opportunities to share in the word of God, Easter Sunday is an especially significant date on the Christian calendar.

Each Easter, Christians celebrate the miracle of Christ's defeat over death through his resurrection and ascension to his father's side in heaven. However awe-inspiring, Easter is much more than this event and its retelling. Easter actually is the core of the Christian religion as it has come to be known, including inspiring the rituals and teachings that have been shared for nearly 2,000 years. Without the events that unfolded during Holy Week, the Christian faith would not exist as it was prophesied. Christ's selfless sacrifice on the cross for others' sins, as well as his miraculous resurrection, are the anchors upon which all of Christianity has been built.

In 1 Corinthians 15:17, St. Paul wrote, "And if Christ

has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." Pope Benedict XVI similarly summarized St. Paul's words, indicating that if the resurrection were taken away, it may be possible to piece together ideas about God and men, but the Christian faith would be 'dead.' In his book, Jesus of Nazareth, Pope Benedict further wrote, 'Jesus would be a failed religious leader; he would then remain purely human, and his authority would extend only so far as his message is of interest to us.'

According to Christianity.com, Easter is part of the redemptive plan of mankind. It is worthy of celebration because it proved to people that Jesus is the Son of God. This gives Christians confidence that there is life after death, and they will have the same power working in them that raised Jesus from the dead.

Out of Holy Week and Easter also came the start of Christian masses. On Holy Thursday, Jesus introduced his disciples to the bread that they ate at the Last Supper as 'his body' and the wine as 'his blood.' This would



On Holy Thursday, Jesus and his disciples ate bread and wine symbolizing the flesh of Christ. This ritual would serve as the basis for the Christian celebration of Holy Communion, which remains a vital component of worship.

serve as the basis for the Christian celebration of Holy Communion, which remains a vital component of the faith

and religious services.

Easter inspires Christians across the globe to celebrate their faith.

Where will you live your everlasting life?

LARRY DAVIS

Pastor, Grace and Faith Center

Easter is defined as the most important and oldest festival of the Christian Church, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is held in the western church between March 21 and April 25, on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the Northern spring equinox. However, the story of the Good News of Jesus Christ is not only his resurrection, but it is the who, why, what, when and where.

Jesus' birth was like mine and yours except that his mother was a virgin, and his dad was God. Jesus' life was fairly normal, and he grew as we all do, working as a carpenter.

When he was 30, he began his ministry as the Savior of the world. As he lived, his life portrayed the love that God has for you and I.

We know that because Jesus said he only does what he sees the Father do and he only says what the Father says — we can partake in the Kingdom of God (John 5:19 and John 12:49). Like this: *God so loved the world*

that He gave his only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). This is the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' life was an example of the love, hope, faith, grace and truth he made available to all who would believe. But not all believed, not all loved and not all followed him.

In fact, the religious leaders of that time hated him and eventually killed Jesus.

During Jesus' three-and-a-half years in the ministry, he introduced, initiated, orchestrated and fulfilled the reason for his presence on earth. That was to give to you and I a way into God's presence and the opportunity to join the Kingdom of God.

We can be transformed out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light, with the guarantee of everlasting life in heaven instead of an eternity in hell. Jesus was beaten, crucified, buried, and three days later rose again for you and I. That means Jesus won the war over the devil for control of the Earth and heaven!

Where will you live your everlasting life?

TRUTH

FROM PAGE C1

side the baseball field where you can buy tickets for the games today. That night I called the dad who was our AWANA leader; two weeks later he met me at the altar and we prayed and I went public with my faith.

One thing in those early days that struck me as strange was our relation-

ship with Easter — specifically, the Resurrection we celebrate on Easter morning. What was constantly shared with me was the death of Jesus on the cross and his willingness to die for my sins. The cross, after all, has become the iconic symbol of our faith. The Jewish people have the Star of David, Muslims have the crescent and we have the cross. As a young Christian I felt the Resurrection was simply a cherry on the top of a sundae we celebrated on a Sunday. I

had no idea how vital it was to my new identity, made possible because of Christ Jesus.

You see friend, the cross is about death and the Resurrection is about life. Both work together to help us see the heart of God the Father. As a pastor, I have a lot of favorite verses and passages and near the top of that list is Ephesians chapter 2. The whole chapter is great because it builds a case for all of us. In these verses we can see where we are, where

we were and where we are heading if we know Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord. The chapter's opening lines are "And you were dead in trespasses and sins..." This death is important to recognize and realize. My sin didn't simply break God's heart, it broke my relationship with Him. The cost of sin is death."

Just when I had no hope or ability to be brought back to life, the hero of all our stories enters. Paul will begin verse 4 with two words, "BUT

GOD..."! There is a temptation to get in the way here and commutate the rest of the verse, but I assure you if you allow it to wash over you there is no commentary necessary. "But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ..."

We are made alive because Jesus told the truth about coming back from the grave. The cross is about death; the

Resurrection is about life and life abundantly! There is so much more to say about this great relationship because of the cross and the Resurrection — more than this space allows. So, I will leave you with this... we never graduate from the beauty of the cross AND the Resurrection! Both work together to reveal the heart of God's love for you. May we make this our greatest celebration, not just on Easter Sunday but every day and every minute of our lives!

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MADELYN EDWARDS
TRI-COUNTY REPORTER

Members of the Tedder family take a picture with the Easter bunny at the 2023 Springtown Hop & Shop event on the Square. From left are 3-year-old Indigo Tedder, 6-month-old Lennox Tedder, and Madison Tedder.



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Kiss in the dark

DR. G. WESLEY SHOTWELL
Pastor, Ash Creek Baptist Church



Dr. G. Wesley Shotwell

I have been thinking about Judas lately. Judas betrayed his friend Jesus with a kiss in the dark. Bible scholars have debated his motive for centuries, but whatever the motive it came from a dark place.

The Gospel of Matthew says that the next morning, when it was light, Judas was "seized with remorse." He tried to undo what he had done, but there are some things that cannot be undone once they are done. "I have sinned," he confessed to the religious leaders, looking for mercy and grace. But

he found no mercy or grace from them. "What do we care?" they said. "That's your problem." All Judas could do now was throw the blood money to the mercy seat in the temple.

Remorse is hard to relieve. When you have done something that can't be undone it is hard to find mercy and grace. Often, even pastors and church people hold back mercy as if to say, "What do we care? That's your problem." No wonder sinners don't come to church for relief.

Judas' story does not end well. Matthew tells us that Judas went out and hanged himself. That is what hap-

pens when a person has no hope of mercy; they end up at the end of their rope.

There was another option open for Judas, though, if only he could have seen it. I wonder what would have happened if Judas had waited until Sunday morning; if he had waited until Easter? The morning after betrayal remorse is raging and it is hard to have any hope at all, but what if he had waited for Easter? He would have seen the risen Christ and known that God could undo what he had done. He tried to undo it himself but could not, so he lost faith and hope and ended it all. He did not believe God could set things right. He did

not know about Easter.

But we do know about Easter! We know that Christ is risen and set things right. We know that in Christ there is mercy and grace! Could Judas have found mercy from Jesus if he had but waited for the resurrection? I don't know, and we will never know, for that is not how the story works out. But we do know that Peter, who also betrayed Jesus, found the mercy he needed. We know that Paul, who persecuted the followers of Jesus, saw the risen Christ and received God's mercy. The list of the remorseful could go on. Millions of people with the remorse of having done things that cannot

be undone have found God's mercy and grace because they know the risen Christ. We know about Easter!

Perhaps you live with remorse. You regret some decision that seemed like a good idea in the dark of night, but now in the morning, when you can see, the reality of your sin has stolen all your hope for mercy and grace. You have tried to undo what you did. You tried throwing money in the plate and pleading with the preacher but found no hope.

You cannot undo what you have done.

But God can. Christ has risen from the dead and set things right.

The Message

ALTON DAVIS
Pastor, Community Bible Fellowship



Alton Davis

I recall a time when one of our daughters was being courted by a young man. To get his message across to her of his fondness for her, he arranged post-it-notes on our front door to read "will you be my GF?" The message was not handwritten, rather the little notes were neatly arranged just right to spell out his intended message. The message was received with the love with which it was sent, and a never-ending relationship began. That was 13 years ago and now

our daughter and the young man are married and have a beautiful baby girl. Simple

messages deliver a powerful impact!

I must admit my son-in-law was tactful and his message was impactful in achieving his intended purpose. As I recalled this family memory, I drew similarities to the message that our heavenly Father sent by way of the cross. God's message was not handwritten (although it is recorded in writing), rather his message was carefully arranged in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The message delivered through our Savior was an expression of his love for all humanity. Jesus, in willing obedi-

ence to the Father, fulfilled his purpose by laying his life down as a sacrifice for all our sins; and in the Father's acceptance of the Son's sacrifice, God raised Christ from the dead to display his great power over death, hell and the grave. It was the most powerful, tactful and impactful message of love ever delivered to mankind, all communicated with great hope that the message would be received by everyone for the purpose of salvation. To insinuate that Christ's life was simple would be misleading, however, for the one who believes salvation is made

simple. A simple message delivered with a powerful impact!

Resurrection Sunday is a time for believers across the world who are being saved by the powerful message of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection to celebrate our risen Savior and to give thanks for the abundant life Jesus brought forth. For others, the message of love, forgiveness and salvation still speaks and is available to be received. Hope remains that many others will receive the message of the cross today and the resurrection power it brings. His message has been

displayed, written, delivered and posted for all the world to see. Will you receive it with the love, forgiveness and salvation with which it was sent? If so, your journey has begun to a life of eternal peace and joy.

1 Corinthians 1:18 (NKJV) "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

Hebrews 1:1-2 (NKJV) "God who at various times and various ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son . . ."

PROMISES

FROM PAGE C1

to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey," (Zechariah 9:9).

The other gospels state that garments were also laid before Christ, a custom generally reserved only for kings (see 2 Kings 9:13).

Palms also reminded people of rejoicing, worshiping and thanksgiving. Solomon's Temple was dedicated at

the Feast of Tabernacles, in remembrance of Israel's 40 years of wandering and living in tents. Part of the tabernacle celebration called for the people to take "branches of palm trees . . . and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God . . ." Leviticus 23:40.

In the same way, Jesus was ending nearly 40 years of his earthly life in which he was "tabernacled" in an earthly body (John 1:14 even used the same word for "tabernacle" when he said Jesus "dwelt" among us).

More significantly, the very

day Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem was the same day in which the priests inspected the lambs which would be used for Passover. Again, thanks to John's gospel, we know Jesus entered Jerusalem Sunday, the "next day" after the Sabbath rest. That was the 10th day of Nisan, four days before the Passover when the Jews selected the Passover lamb, "the first month . . . on the tenth day . . . each man is to take a lamb for his family" (Exodus 12:1-3).

Provisionally, Jesus was

especially set apart that day as the Lamb of God. John's Gospel and John's revelation frequently refer to Jesus as God's Lamb, and so also does Peter's first epistle: ". . . you were redeemed . . . with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Peter 1:18-19.

A borrowed colt, a spotless lamb, the royal praise, the joyful thanksgiving, garments spread along the road, and palm branches were all divinely interwoven by God's loving and gracious hand to show that Jesus, the prom-

ised Messiah, was indeed the fulfillment of prophecy.

One day in heaven, according to Revelation 7:9-17, "a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, (will stand) before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands."

My prayer is that you will place your trust in this promised Lamb of God who took away our sins. "For God made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to become sin for us, that we might become

the righteousness of God in Him," (2 Corinthians 5:21). By the blood of the Lamb and our testimony, we can overcome the accuser, who is specifically called "the Devil and Satan," (see Revelation 12:9-11).

Rev. Timothy McKeown is the pastor of GracePointe Church, which is located halfway between Azle and Springtown on State Highway 199, where every first-time guest can receive a free copy of his devotional book, "The Gospel of John, One Day at a Time."

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Eggs are hung on outdoor tree branches and bushes or are placed on cut branches displayed inside.

Easter trees makes festive spring decorations

Easter is coming and it's time to put up the tree. For those thinking right now that trees are for an entirely different Christian holiday, you are both right and wrong. Even though trees may be more widely associated with Christmas, Easter trees are an increasingly popular and festive tradition that trace their roots to Germany.

The Easter tree is known as Ostereierbaum in Germany and is a centuries-old custom. Eggs are hung on outdoor tree branches and bushes or are placed on cut branches displayed inside. While the tradition is traced to Germany, German-influenced locales like Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, and the Pennsylvania Dutch region

of the United States also are popular places for Easter trees to appear.

For 50 years, one person branched out with his own Ostereierbaum tradition. Volker Kraft decorated an apple tree on his property in the town of Saalfeld, Germany, adding more eggs each year as the tree grew larger. The tradition came to an end in 2015. At one point the tree held 10,000 eggs, all hand-crafted by Kraft and his family. However, a tree in Rostock, Germany held the Guinness World Record for tree with the most eggs - a display of 80,000.

While Easter trees are typically more modest than Kraft's tree, the displays can be as large or as small as one desires. Many Easter trees

consist of a few branches placed in a vase decorated with flowers, ribbons and Easter eggs. Pussy willow branches work well, though any branches can stand in.

When decorating Easter trees, families can use plastic eggs or even real ones. Using a sharp knife or needle, make two small holes in a raw egg. Blow out the inside of the egg until the shell is hollow. Then decorate the egg and thread a ribbon through the holes so it can be hung on the tree. If desired, place sweet Easter treats, such as chocolate eggs or pastel-colored cupcakes, under the Easter tree.

Decorating an outdoor tree also is possible and very visible. It can be a great way to share Easter blessings with others in the community.

Significant days during Holy Week

Each year in early spring, Christians across the globe celebrate their faith on Easter. Easter commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, an event which is described in the New Testament.

One need not be Christian to recognize the significance of Easter Sunday to practicing Christians. However, non-Christians may not recognize that the week that precedes Easter Sunday is important and full of meaning as well. According to Christianity.com, the name 'Holy Week,' which is the name Christians have given to the week preceding Easter Sunday, can be traced all the way back to the fourth century. By the end of that century, Christians commemorated various events that unfolded in the week leading up to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That's why Christians now celebrate Palm Sunday, Holy Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday over the course of the week prior to Easter Sunday. Such celebrations underscore just how significant this period is for faithful Christians across the globe.

PALM SUNDAY

Palm Sunday begins Holy Week and commemorates the entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem. Upon entering the city, Jesus was greeted by crowds waving palm branches. That is why Christians receive palm branches or palm crosses during Palm Sunday Mass.

HOLY WEDNESDAY

Holy Wednesday draws attention to the abandonment of Jesus by his disciples. Holy Wednesday services may feature Tenebrae, a religious service characterized by the extinguishing of candles. That portion of the service is meant to symbolize darkness, which is what 'Tenebrae' means in Latin.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

The Last Supper is commemorated on Maundy Thursday, which also commemorates the Washing of the Feet (Maundy). The Last Supper was Jesus's final meal with his apostles before his crucifixion. According to Christian scripture, Jesus predicted one of the apostles present at the meal would betray him. This also was when Jesus foretold that Peter will deny knowing him three times before the next

morning. According to Trinity College, Maundy Thursday reminds Christians to love others as Jesus loves them.

GOOD FRIDAY

Good Friday commemorates the trial of Jesus and his resulting death sentence, torture, crucifixion, and burial. It's hard to characterize any of those things as 'good,' which can cause a little confusion among Christians and non-Christians alike. However, Trinity College indicates that, in this context, 'good' connotes something holy or pious.

HOLY SATURDAY

Holy Saturday concludes Holy Week. Even though many faithful Christians awake early and don their Sunday best on Easter morning, Holy Saturday celebrations are not muted. On Holy Saturday, Christians may attend a late-night Easter Vigil service that includes a liturgy and the celebration of the Eucharist. The two-part celebration commemorates the Eucharist as symbolic of the emergence from darkness into the light.

Holy Week is a time for faithful Christians to celebrate their faith in advance of Easter Sunday.



Palm Sunday begins Holy Week and commemorates the entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem.

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MADLYN EDWARDS | TRI-COUNTY REPORTER
 Three-year-old Dalton Palmer hunts eggs with his mother Ashley Palmer at Reno's Easter egg hunt on April 8, 2023 at Reno Elementary School.

LIFE
 FROM PAGE C1

a deeply rooted hatred for Christ. King Herod came up with a plan to kill him from day one. He assumed he could get the Magi (wise men) to give him all the information about Christ, so he could find him and end the threat he thought Christ posed to his throne. Instead, they saw the glory that Christ brought to Earth and showered Jesus with gifts and praise. So not only was there a deeply rooted hatred for Christ, there was an unexplainable admiration. Both things were important for his life to have the impact on this world that it did.

THE DEATH

Jesus was sold out by one of his closest followers, and then he was arrested. In moments leading up to the arrest, Judas told the armed guards "The one I kiss is the man." And then he proceeded to kiss Jesus. He sold his Master out with one of the greatest shows of affection we know: a kiss. After his arrest, Pilate knew there was nothing to charge Jesus with. He had done nothing wrong. He gave the crowd a chance to either save him or save the murderer, Barabbas. As we all know, they saved the murderer and chose Christ's death.

THE BURIAL

Typically, the burial is our final "goodbye." It allows for some sort of closure for friends and family members. Watching the casket close and be lowered into the ground (or a body carried into the tomb during the

Bible days) signifies the end. For Christ, it was strictly symbolic. The burial was necessary, but only because what would happen next was unprecedented. For many who loved Jesus, it felt like it was the end, but it was only the beginning.

THE RESURRECTION

This is the unprecedented part of the story. Like it is for everyone else, the burial was supposed to be the end. This is where our faith takes us from a fairy tale to a miraculous event that can only be explained supernaturally. I'm so thankful for my faith, because without it, the rest of the story doesn't make sense. Even those who saw him couldn't believe it. God used an imperfect, Mary Magdalene, to alert the rest of his followers. No one could believe it until they saw the proof; the nail scars.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16 (NKJV)

I'm so thankful there was proof then, and there is still proof now. I can't go through life without seeing God's incredible work at hand. He was born, crucified, buried and resurrected. But there is more news! He will come again for his people!

I encourage each one of you to find a place to worship Easter Sunday, March 31. If you don't have a church you call home, you are welcome to join us at 10:45 a.m. at either of our two campuses, The WORD @ Springtown or The WORD @ Lakeside. God Bless!

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Unique Easter traditions from around the globe

Easter Sunday is a significant day on the Christian calendar. Easter Sunday will be celebrated on March 31, 2024, and many of those celebrations will feature some notable traditions. Some traditions are undoubtedly familiar to practicing Christians, while others might come as a surprise. As Easter approaches, faithful Christians and others intrigued by the holiday can consider these notable traditions from around the globe.

EASTER WITCHES

Witches are typically associated with Halloween, but they play a role in celebrating Easter in Finland. According to the Finland Promotion Board, Easter traditions in the northern European nation feature a mixture of religious references with customs re-

lated to the arrival of spring. It's not unheard of for young Finnish children, particularly girls, to dress up as Easter witches the Sunday before Easter and go from door to door requesting treats in exchange for offerings designed to drive away evil spirits. The FPB notes that it's even common for children in western Finland to don their witch outfits and roam on Easter Sunday.

FIREWORKS IN FLORENCE

The folk tradition of Scoppio del Carro ('Explosion of the Cart') takes place in Florence, Italy. The Uffizi Gallery reports that this tradition can be traced to the First Crusade in 1099. During the first Easter in Jerusalem, Crusaders gave the blessed fire to the people as a symbol of purification. That custom



PHOTO COURTESY ERIK ALBERS

Guatemala's Semana Santa ('Easter Festival') features detailed carpets of colored sawdust adorning a Good Friday processional route.



The Scoppio del Carro, or the "Explosion of the Cart", dates back over 350 years. An elaborate wagon built in 1622 and standing two to three stories high is pulled by a pair of oxen decorated in garlands through the streets of Florence to the square between the Baptistery and Cathedral.

has endured in Florence, where each Easter Sunday morning around 10 a.m. a candle is lit in the church of Santi Apostoli. That same candle is then used to light an antique cart loaded with fireworks, marking the beginning of a display that lasts around 20 minutes.

THE CARPETS OF SEMANA SANTA

Carpets might not be the first thing most Easter celebrants think of when pondering the holiday, but that might be the case for anyone who's ever spent the holiday in Antigua, Guatemala. Guatemala's Semana Santa ('Easter Festival') features detailed carpets of colored sawdust adorning a Good Friday processional route. Preparation for the colorful and stunning display begins

months in advance as the intricate carpets require ample time to produce.

WHIPS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Among the more unique Easter traditions takes place each Easter Monday in the Czech Republic. In adherence to this tradition, known locally as pomlázka, boys, and sometimes men, gather willow branches and braid them together into whips. The whips are then decorated with ribbons before boys visit girls (or men visit women) who they know and lightly tap them with the whips. The tradition is believed to bring women luck, vitality and fertility.

These are just some of the unique traditions many Christians adhere to as part of their Easter celebrations.



A traditional 'pomlázka' believed to bring women luck, vitality and fertility.

HAPPY
Easter

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in this beautiful holiday.

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