



From the Desk of Pastor Meyer

As you're reading this, Easter is still a few weeks away. Even so, you've probably noticed how Easter is becoming more and more secular, joining Christmas in losing the Biblical reason behind the celebration. The world around us celebrates Easter with bunnies, baby chicks, candy, baskets and dyed eggs. Christians do these things, too. Don't mistake my comment, here: I'm not necessarily criticizing anyone who hides a basket full of candy for their kids to find (as long as it's not the nasty, cheap candy that no one wants. Then, criticism is deserved!). I'm lamenting that the loss of the message of Easter.

Some people argue that Easter was the Church's way of wrestling against pagan springtime celebrations. The etymology of our English "Easter" is derived from either an Old English word *Oester* or the old German *Ostern*, both of which mean "east." They'll connect the dots to an ancient Anglo-Saxon fertility rites that supposedly used rabbits and eggs. They laugh and say that we "stole" a pagan celebration and tried to "convert" it into a Christian holiday (holiday is, itself, an Old English term meaning "holy day." Now you know...). They might be right – sources on the internet are about evenly divided, and we know how internet sources are right half of the time.

Me, personally, I don't buy it, but more than that, I don't worry about it. So, what if that's what they did? I'll say "Happy Easter" with everyone else, but more and more, I am tempted to refer to Easter as Resurrection Day, because that is what we are celebrating: the resurrection of Jesus. It's that remarkable and wonderful day when the tomb, that swallowed Jesus on Good Friday, spits Jesus up – just like the whale did to Jonah (which, by the way, was a "sign" or foreshadowing of what Jesus did).

So, I call Easter "Resurrection Day" because it identifies the reason for the celebration – the day Jesus rose from the grave. I also call it "Resurrection Day" because the day stands as a promise that, in Christ, we will also be raised. You have been baptized into Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6), and just as Christ as raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, you too shall be raised. Resurrection day looks to the past, but it also looks ahead.

And, in looking ahead, there is also the pledge of a reunion. Many of us celebrate Easter (whoops! See? Still Easter) with a big family meal. On the final Resurrection Day, there will be an incredible family meal (Isaiah 25). Our Resurrected Lord, Himself, will be the host and we – all who live and die in faith in Christ – will have seats at this resurrection meal.

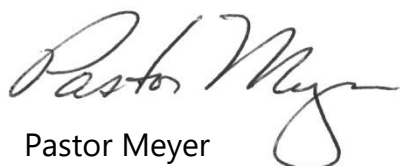
Try it. This year, instead of Happy Easter, try saying "Blessed Resurrection Day!" You'll get some odd looks, probably, but it gives you an opportunity to explain and proclaim Christ, not a rabbit. Only One of those died for you; only One rose for you; only One promises that you, too, will be raised to live with Him into eternity.

Here are some housekeeping items for your consideration:

- You'll find enclosed here my letter from February 21, officially declining the call to First Lutheran in Orange Grove. Since the March *Messenger* had my letter informing you of the Call, I want to include it here for the historical record. My invitation to share why you think my "work here isn't done," remains. I would love to hear those thoughts.
- We are also including the letter that Council shared after church on Sunday, March 23. Everyone is experiencing the effects of rising prices. The church is struggling as well, largely due to the sharp increase in our property and liability insurance premiums. We will address this further in the April voter's meeting on the 13th. I personally encourage everyone to attend and listen to what is said.
- Look around on Sundays and notice who isn't here – particularly those who are not your close friends. Make it your personal goal to contact at least one person by Monday evening. Tell them you miss them, you pray that everything is OK and that you hope to see them the following Sunday. Follow up with them Saturday and re-encourage them to be in attendance the next day. Then, watch for and greet them when they arrive!
- We have also had a good number of visitors with us. Make sure to greet them before or after church. If you are sitting near them, and they seem "lost" during the service, offer some guidance.
- As Lent draws to its climax with Holy Week, I encourage you to join us for those additional worship services. Two Wednesday services (with preceding meals) remain on the 2nd and 9th, followed by Palm Sunday on the 13th, Maundy Thursday on the 16th, and Good Friday on the 17th. We will celebrate Resurrection morning with two services at 7am and 10am with breakfast and a children's Easter egg hunt between. There will be no Sunday school that morning. Then, don't forget the First Sunday of Easter on the 27th, as the Resurrection story continues!
- On a personal note, I want to thank everyone for their patience and their prayers while I continue to deal with my knee and back injuries. Leading the services from the floor and utilizing the continuous flow of communion wasn't what I wanted to do, but it is what I needed to do to be able to administer the Sacrament. Both my knee and back are doing OK right now, so I'm babying both, trying not to make either one mad at me again.

God's richest blessings to you all as Lent comes to its conclusion, that we may enter into Easter with "Alleluias," glad hearts, and filled with the truth of the Resurrection.

Peace & joy,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Meyer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Pastor Meyer