



# Bulletin

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*He Is Risen!*

## THE EASTER MESSAGE

BY JIM DALY

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, BACK WHEN VIDEO STORES WERE STILL AROUND, my wife and I went looking for a well-known film that told the story of Easter. We couldn't find it on the shelf, so we asked the young lady behind the counter if it was available. She pointed out an animated video about the Easter bunny and another that explained how to decorate eggs. We said, "No, we're looking for a video about the true story of Easter." Judging by the confused look on her face, she had no idea what we were talking about.

Sadly, a lot of families are as confused about the true message of Easter as that video store clerk. They believe it's about mountains of chocolate, colorful eggs and cute bunny rabbits. What they're missing, however, is the deeply profound truth that makes Easter one of my favorite holidays.

Easter is about hope instead of despair, love instead of fear, redemption instead of judgment. It's about God saving humanity when humanity was helpless to save itself. Though we may suffer darkness and heartache for a season, we can anchor our hearts in the hope of Easter.

As Romans 15:13 promises, God is a "God of hope" who fills us "with all joy and peace." Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, hope, meaning and new life are assuredly ours.

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## THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER AT EASTER

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For many Christians, Easter is the most important holiday of the year. During your busy preparations, take a few minutes to reflect on these three things during the Easter holiday:

### **Reclaim the Holiday for Christ**

Discover ways to remind your family of the resurrection. One older friend has passed down the custom of baking a two-layer chocolate cake with a hollowed-out portion representing the empty tomb. A cookie propped up next to the "tomb" represents the stone the angel rolled away. Her children, grandchildren and now great-grandchildren look forward to eating the cake and hearing familiar Scriptures about that glorious morning. Read Matthew 28 with joy and wonder. Hear these words: "He is not here, for he has risen, as he said" (Matthew 28:6).

### **Reflect on Christ's Death for You**

Consider specific sins you have committed (doing what you should not have done), and also sins of omission (not doing what you know you should have done). Confess these sins to the Lord.

Think about the physical, spiritual and emotional suffering your Lord endured for those sins. Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for the perfect Lamb of God, given for you.

Contemplate this verse: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). End with a reading of the Easter story.

### **Reach Out to the Lost for Christ**

Watch for visitors who may not feel comfortable in church. You can play a role in kindly exemplifying the truth that Christ died for sinners.

If you have prepared for Easter by thinking of your sin and your need of a Savior, you will be equipped to lead someone humbly to Christ. You don't need to be perfect to say, "Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). We can all rejoice in this marvelous gift of salvation.

He is risen! He is risen, indeed!

—*Caroline Newheiser*



# EASTER HOSPITALITY TIPS FOR CHURCHES



How can churches show hospitality to visitors this Easter season? Here are two very simple points:

## 1. Welcome Visitors

Perhaps for the Easter weekend, you could dedicate a welcoming team whose job is to keep an eye out for newcomers. However, it is also important to encourage all regular congregation members to be intentionally welcoming to newcomers. Many people will go to lunch afterward with family, but having extra coffee and pastries before or after the service could add to the welcome.

## 2. Remember Christ, the Cross and the Resurrection

On a Sunday when you have so many visitors, the opportunity to direct visitors to the very heart of faith—the Lord Jesus Christ—is very important.

Easter is the day to ensure we present what is central to the faith—Jesus crucified and risen. Focus on our hope in Christ—the hope of sins paid for by Jesus' death and hope of his death-defeating resurrection.

As Christians, we have hope, not just for this life, but for the one to come (1 Corinthians 15:19). Boldly hold out the hope

of the cross and resurrection and pray the Lord might graciously open blind eyes and soften hard hearts.

“We rejoice in hope of the glory of God . . . and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (Romans 5:2, 5).

Wouldn't it be wonderful if someone visiting your church this Easter came to understand the message of the cross and put their faith in the risen Christ?

The angel announced, “He is not here, for he has risen, as he said” (Matthew 28:6). Hebrews reminds us that Jesus became a man and died so “that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery” (2:14-15).

We have a message of hope—may it resound from our churches this Easter! May it motivate us to welcome the newcomer, proclaim the Lord Jesus, his death and resurrection!

—Peter C. Orr



## BUILDING SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

This month, we're challenging you to strengthen your faith by practicing a spiritual discipline! Here are three simple steps for getting started:

**Head:** The first step is to pick a discipline you want to practice. Here are a few disciplines to choose from: gratitude, humility, compassion, self-examination, meditating on Scripture, attentiveness, simplicity, discernment and chastity. Choose one that will build up your spiritual strength.

Pray for guidance in making your choice—is there an area of your spiritual life that God wants you to be stronger in? Once you've made your choice, write it down and keep it in a place where you will see it as a friendly reminder.

**Heart:** The next step is to use another spiritual discipline—fasting—to help you work on the other spiritual discipline you've chosen. Fasting doesn't have to be just giving up food. In fact, for this challenge, choose something in your life that you could fast from this month.

Let's use social media as an example. Instead of spending time on social media, you could work on your spiritual discipline. Use fasting to honor God and make time to build up your spiritual strength.

**Hands:** Once you have chosen your discipline and have made time for it, start practicing! Whatever discipline you choose, be intentional to think about how you have applied that spiritual discipline during the day.

For example, if you're focusing on gratitude, take time to dwell on the things you are thankful for and then express that to God. If you're working on compassion, examine your actions to see how much you have used that discipline. Keep track of your progress so you can see how much you grow.

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