

Living for Life

April's Theme: Easter

Introduction

Easter falls on a different Sunday every year. It also follows Lent.

Easter is the most significant day for Christians because though Jesus died on a cross, he rose from the dead to teach and serve others for forty more days before he ascended to heaven. This is a joyful day of celebration for all Christians as its message reminds us that life overcomes death. It is THE event that proved Jesus was the Messiah. Furthermore, life overcoming death forms the foundation for all Christian thinking.

Though we celebrate resurrection on Easter Sunday, this day also begins a new season in the church year, Eastertide. There are seven Sundays in Eastertide. It ends with Pentecost.

Package Contents

- Wondering Cards:** This package has six wondering cards. Use them for conversation starters when the family is together, such as over a meal, after watching television show if a card seems applicable to the story or riding in the car together as a way to pass the miles. Use them throughout the month. They can be used once or multiple times.
- Scriptures:** (*purple*) This package contains four scriptures all having to do with gratitude. Discuss at least two of the scriptures during the month. Find the scripture in the Bible and then discuss one or two of the questions on the reference sheet. You can rephrase the question if it will help them to answer the question. Also, you can revisit the scripture at another time during the month if you want to ask the other questions. Bear in mind that the answers are not clear cut, black and white. You can answer them too.
- Though the four stories of the resurrection all refer to the same event, they are not told in the same way. This can be confusing because we would expect that the one event defining us as Christians would be in full agreement. When we read the Easter stories, try to read them as a way to understand life over death.
- Prayers:** (*gold*) This packet contains several Easter prayers. These prayers will help you to understand resurrection's importance.
- Activity Sheet:** (*green*) The activity ties together this month's theme. One of the activities is a word search, which is in this packet.
- Resources:** (*white*) There was no Easter bunny and no Easter eggs in the Easter stories. This sheet has links to tell you how they became part of Easter's traditions. Also, there is a picture and a link to an article about tombs in Jesus' time.

See the obverse side for Bible information.

Basic Bible User's Instructions

The Bible contains writings which are thousands of years old. It is a sacred book containing wisdom, although written long ago, it remains fresh as scriptures still can teach us how to live today. Some people call the Bible an operating manual for life.

The Bible contains "books." Each book has one or more chapters, and each chapter has verses.

When we reference a scripture, we cite the book, the chapter, and the verse or verses. Thus, if we see a reference to Luke's account of Jesus' birth, the citation would be Luke 2:8-20. It means:

- The Gospel According to Luke
- Chapter two
- Verses 8-20

Note that a colon separates the chapter and the verse(s).

Furthermore, the Bible we use as Protestants has two major sections: Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament has the same books as in the Jewish Bible (although in a different order). The section often called the New Testament is scriptures used by Christians to understand Jesus and our faith.

Books of the Bible

Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures		New Testament	
Genesis	Ecclesiastes	Matthew	Titus
Exodus	Song of Solomon	Mark	Philemon
Leviticus	Isaiah	Luke	Hebrews
Numbers	Jeremiah	John	James
Deuteronomy	Lamentations	Acts of the Apostles	1 Peter
Joshua	Ezekiel	Romans	2 Peter
Judges	Daniel	1 Corinthians	1 John
Ruth	Hosea	2 Corinthians	2 John
1 Samuel	Amos	Galatians	3 John
2 Samuel	Obadiah	Ephesians	Jude
1 Kings	Jonah	Philippians	Revelation
2 Kings	Micah	Colossians	
1 Chronicles	Nahum	1 Thessalonians	
2 Chronicles	Habakkuk	2 Thessalonians	
Ezra	Zephaniah	1 Timothy	
Nehemiah	Haggai	2 Timothy	
Esther	Zechariah		
Job	Malachi		
Psalms			
Proverbs			

Matthew 28:1-10

Questions

- Describe what it must feel like to experience fear and joy at the same time
- Which would be make your more fearful, seeing the rock rolling away and the angel sitting on it or the fact that the tomb was empty even though it was sealed shut and guarded?
- What was Matthew's point about an earthquake and the stone rolling away?

About Matthew 28:1-10

Of the four Easter accounts, this is the only one in which described the morning in these extraordinarily physical terms: an earthquake, the stone rolling away, an angel sitting on stone, and guards becoming like dead men.

Mark 16:1-8

Questions

- Anointing Jesus' body with spices was a good deed which the women didn't get to do. Can you think of a time when you planned to do something good, but something else happened that was better?
- The women expected to see a stone to covering the mouth of Jesus' tomb. If you were one of the women, what would you think when you saw that it was rolled away?
- If someone told you something that was unbelievable, what would they have to do to convince you they were telling the truth?
- How do you think the men found out about the resurrection if the women told no one?

About Mark 16:1-8

This was first of the four Easter stories. It is also the story with the fewest details. In fact, early Christians felt compelled to add more details, which accounts for the two additional endings to this version of the Easter story.

Luke 24:1-12

Questions

- When the women went to tell the men about the empty tomb, the men thought it was an “idle tale.” How would you feel if you told someone a true story that seemed too fantastic to be real, but they did not believe you?
- Why do you think none of the men went to the tomb that morning? Or was it possible that the women went to the tomb because they had more courage than the men?
- When Peter arrived at the tomb, he was amazed at what had happened. No one was there to tell him what happened. Why don't you think he believed the women?
- Do you think this is an idle tale?

About Luke 24:1-12

Of the four writers who wrote about Jesus' life (also known as the gospels), Luke gave the women the most favorable treatment. This is the only story in which one of the men responded by going to see this miracle for himself.

John 20:1-18

Questions

- John did not say if Mary looked in the tomb or not. How do you think she knew Jesus wasn't in the tomb?
- Why do you think Mary came alone to the tomb?
- Do you think Mary was afraid when she saw Jesus?
- How would you feel if you saw Jesus?

About John 20:1-18

This is the only account in which Jesus appeared. It is the only account which did not describe women going to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body.

Easter Prayers

Easter Prayers of Praise

The tomb was empty, O God. Spirit overpowered flesh. Love trumped fear. Life overcame death. Christ rose and left the tomb. We come today having walked the road through anxiety and uncertainty. You have led us and guided us along the way. And then we saw the rock roll away. You have renewed in us hope. You have kindled the Holy Spirit's fire in us. You have strengthened us in love. May we proclaim Easter's message, life over death, through our ministries of healing and grace. Amen.

We've come through our Lenten journey, O God. Though we have seen death, today we celebrate new life. The stone is rolled away. We leave the tomb with our eyes opened to the joy of living in Christ. Love has cast out fear. Hope has overcome despair. Life has triumphed over death. Set your Spirit upon us in this time, O God, that we might go forth from here to proclaim the gospel in our ministries of grace. Amen.

Our journey through Lent is over, O God. The stone has been rolled away and the tomb is empty. Once again you show us that life always triumphs over death. Let the joy of this moment fill our hearts and let us never fear. May we boldly proclaim through our ministries that Christ is risen and that love has come again. Amen.

O God, the stone is rolled away and the tomb is empty. Christ is risen! We come in awe of Resurrection, a reminder that life always triumphs over death. This is our wellspring of hope. This is a reminder that love is the antidote to fear. Grant that we, O God, can be messengers of hope in this world filled with despair. Grant that we can be bearers of the Good News through our ministries of healing and grace. Grant that our ministries be touchstones of love in this community and the world. Amen.

Easter Prayer of Confession

God of Life and Resurrection's Promise, we come before you bursting with joy at the fulfillment of your word in Christ Jesus. This is a story of new life and hope. But, O God, the stone in our hearts has not been rolled away. In spite of the promise of this day, we cannot move our stone because we fear to face the power of the empty tomb. Forgive us our fears. Restore in us courage, O God, to face the empty tomb so we may proclaim the Good News by speaking truth to power and living out the commandments to love you and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen.

Activities

Go outside and look for signs of new life. Make a list. Perhaps, try to draw what you see.

Read the words in the accompanying hymn, **Now the Green Blade Rises**. The words use a seed as a metaphor for Jesus' death and resurrection. Talk to someone about metaphor and how metaphors can help us to understand difficult ideas.

EASTER

Now the Green Blade Rises

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John M. C. Crum, 1928; alt.

Matt. 27:57-28:7; Luke 23:50-24:12

1 Now the green blade ris - es from the bur - ied grain;
2 In the grave they laid their Love whom hate had slain,
3 Christ came forth at Eas - ter, like the ris - en grain,
4 When our hearts are win - try, griev - ing, or in pain,

Wheat that in dark earth for man - y days has lain;
Think - ing that their Love would nev - er wake a - gain,
Je - sus, who for three days in the grave had lain,
Christ's warm touch can call us back to life a - gain,

Love lives a - gain, that with the dead has been:
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps un - seen:
Quick from the dead the ris - en One is seen:
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:

Refrain
Love is come a - gain like wheat that ris - es green.

John M. C. Crum, an English priest who was canon of Canterbury for fifteen years, wrote these words for this ancient French Christmas carol tune when it was included in the Oxford Book of Carols (1928).

Tune: NOËL NOUVELET 11.10.10.11.
*French noel, 15th century
Harm. Martin F. Shaw, 1928*

Watch a seed grow:

1. Line the bottom of a clear cup or a clear jar with paper towels
2. Put 3 – 4 seeds between the paper towels and the sides of the container
3. Keep the paper towels damp, not wet
4. Watch each day for the seed to grow
5. Keep a daily journal of the seed growth
6. Optional: When the seedling is about two inches, plant the it in a pot or transplant it outside into the ground.

Easter is the ultimate joke on the devil. An old practice from centuries ago was jokes. During the days immediately following Easter, monks played practical jokes on each other. It was a way to lift the heavy somberness of Lent and to celebrate the joy of resurrection. Share jokes with friends and family.

April 21 at 6:30 PM – We'll gather to check-in. Tell you jokes and listen to a story. Here is the link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82808420898>

Meeting ID: 828 0842 0898

Resources

About the Easter bunny and Easter eggs

<https://www.scandinaviastandard.com/origins-of-easter-eggs-how-did-they-become-a-tradition/>

<https://time.com/4732984/easter-eggs-history-origins/>

About Jesus' tomb.



<https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/archaeology-today/biblical-archaeology-topics/how-was-jesus-tomb-sealed/>

What dies and comes back to life?

Why is Jesus not a zombie?

What signs of new life did you see today?

When you saw new life after this winter,
how did that make you feel?

What did Lent teach you?

Now that Lent is over, how do you think
you changed?