

The First Day of the Week

Today much of the religious world observes “Easter” (a “holiday” God’s word never mentions). Their sincere intent is to honor the anniversary of Jesus’ resurrection. Some conduct a “sunrise service” in keeping with the trip the women made to the tomb where they heard, “*He is not here, but is risen!*” (Luke 24:6).

Historical records show that many early Christians gathered early each Sunday morning, not because they were celebrating a special holiday, but because they were slaves who had to work during later hours.

Some might wonder why we aren’t putting a major emphasis on “Easter.” Don’t we believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Indeed, we do! We sing about it, preach about it, teach about it, and gather on the first day of every week because of it. Without His resurrection there is no good news (no gospel)! We would be, as Paul wrote, “*of all men the most pitiable*” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Though we use a different calendar than our first-century brethren, determining the day of the resurrection poses no particular challenge. The apostles and other early Christians certainly knew when it was too. Yet the first-century church, under apostolic guidance, observed no annual holiday to commemorate it, nor did the Lord teach that they should.

What, then, are we to do with Easter? As a religious holiday it has no Biblical sanction whatsoever. As a national custom, we are free to dye eggs and eat chocolate bunnies, or refrain from doing so, as we see fit.

There is no wrong time to sing, preach, and teach about the resurrection of Christ. Most of the world is confused and uninformed about Jesus. Let us take every opportunity to speak the truth in love.

A Dog’s Purpose (from a 4-year-old)

Being a veterinarian, I was called to examine a ten-year-old Irish wolfhound named Belker. The dog’s owners, Ron, his wife Lisa, and their little boy, Shane, were all very attached to Belker and they were hoping for a miracle.

I examined Belker and found he was dying of cancer. I told the family we couldn’t do anything for Belker, and offered to perform the euthanasia procedure for the old dog in their home.

As we made arrangements, Ron and Lisa told me they thought it would be good for the four-year-old Shane to observe the procedure. They felt as though Shane might learn something from the experience.

The next day, I felt the familiar catch in my throat as Belker’s family surrounded him. Shane seemed so calm, petting the old dog for the last time, that I wondered if he understood what was going on. Within a few minutes, Belker slipped peacefully away. The little boy seemed to accept Belker’s transition without any difficulty or confusion.

We sat together for a while after Belker’s death, wondering aloud about the sad fact that animal lives are shorter than human lives. Shane, who had been listening quietly, piped up, “I know why.”

Startled, we all turned to him. What came out of his mouth next stunned me. I’d never heard a more comforting explanation.

He said, “People are born so that they can learn how to live a good life – like loving everybody all the time and being nice, right?” The four-year-old continued, “Well, dogs already know how to do that, so they don’t have to stay as long.”

Live simply. Love generously. Care deeply. Speak kindly. Leave the rest to God.

--Author Unknown (via *Bulletin Gold*)

We Are Never Alone

How He got there we do not know, but there was a fourth figure walking in the midst of the fiery furnace along with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. His appearance, as described by Nebuchadnezzar, was “*like the son of the gods!*” (Daniel 3:25). Charles Spurgeon observed that “as sure as...God puts his children in the furnace He will be in the furnace with them.” We are never alone.

Loneliness intensifies pain in suffering while the support of friends and loved ones lightens the load. A timely note, a visit, or a phone call can make all the difference to someone in physical or emotional pain. We are social beings who need companionship. Following the creation of Adam, God assessed the situation and observed, “*It is not good for the man to be alone...*” (Genesis 2:18). Things have not changed. God’s family, the church, is designed to meet one another’s needs. Paul says, “*Bear on another’s burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ*” (Galatians 6:2). We are in this together.

But there is a greater Comforter, God Himself, who says, “*I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you, so that we may confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?’*” (Hebrews 13:5-6). In the words of a well-known song, we pray, “When other helpers fail, and comforts flee, help of the helpless, O abide with me!” We are never alone. “*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble*” (Psalm 46:1).

When we feel weak in our struggle against heartache and discouragement, there is One who is walking with us in the midst of the fire. His name is Jesus. His devotion is unquestioned and His love incomprehensible (Ephesians 3:19).

We are never alone.

--Glen Elliott (Greenbriar, AR)