



A MINISTRY OF LOUISA CHRISTIAN CHURCH
A VIRGINIA CHRISTIAN CHURCH DISCIPLES OF CHRIST CONGREGATION

The Disciple

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Happy Easter! No, Really!

by Dr. Mark D. Roberts

Condensed from patheos.com/blogs/markdroberts/

No, I haven't got my days mixed up. Yes, I do mean to wish you "Happy Easter!"

You may be done with Easter Sunday services and Easter egg hunts. You may have put away your fancy new Easter dress and your bunny decorations. But Easter isn't over, at least not for millions of Christians throughout history and throughout the world today. Allow me to explain.

As a child, I always thought of Easter as a one-day affair. I liked it just fine. Dressing up in new clothes for church, singing joyful songs in worship, going to my grandparents' house for an Easter egg hunt – I looked forward to all of these traditions each year. But, I must confess, in my mind Easter didn't hold a candle to Christmas. After all, the winter holiday meant lights and decorations, beloved Christmas carols, acting out the nativity story, and, most of all, lots of presents under the tree. Easter was fine . . . but Christmas, now there was the ultimate holiday. After all, you can't exactly expect the Easter Bunny to compete with Santa Claus!

As I got older, I remember hearing my pastor talk about the magnitude of Easter, even suggesting that it was more important than Christmas. When I first heard this, it sounded almost like heresy. How could any holiday beat Christmas? Even granting the importance of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, Easter seemed to be at a decided disadvantage compared to Christmas. Both holidays happened on a single day, I thought, but Christmas celebrations lasted for weeks. (I was not thinking of the twelve-day Christian season of Christmas, by the way, but all of the festivities that lead up to Christmas day.) Easter took up a few hours on a single Sunday, and that was it, or so I thought.

It wasn't until I took a seminary course in preparation for my ordination that I learned that some people considered Easter to be, not a day, but a season of the year, a *seven-week season* at that. Easter Sunday, from this perspective, begins a season in the church year that ends with Pentecost Sunday, the day Christians remember the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the earliest believers in Jesus. I was willing to grant that thinking about Easter as a season was an interesting idea. And, by the time I was in grad school, I did agree with my pastor that, theologically speaking, Easter was at least as important as Christmas, if not more (especially if you link Easter and Good Friday). But the notion of Easter as a season seemed theoretical at best. It certainly wasn't a part of my own Christian experience.



Newsletter Update

After a year of creating and editing the Newsletter on a weekly and bi-weekly basis, I felt that it was time to change the time frame of Newsletter publication once again (hopefully for the last time).

The newsletter will now be published once a month. As you can see in the header, this is the May issue (available the last Sunday of April).

I encourage you to reach out to me with articles and items you would like to see. I always enjoy hearing your thoughts, both encouragements and suggestions for improvements.

Thank you for your support.

Sheryl

In what I now consider to be the season of Easter, I want to write about how we might let this be a time of spiritual growth, a season of deeper intimacy with God. I've come to believe that, in many ways, Easter gets short shrift in our churches. As a result, we miss out on some of the richness and joy of a full Easter celebration. There's no biblical rule that says you have to celebrate Easter for seven weeks. In fact, there's no biblical rule that says you have to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on any particular day. For the early Christians, *gathering on Sunday* was itself a weekly remembrance of the resurrection. But I believe that if we extend our celebrations of Easter to a yearly season, the result can be a more vital and jubilant faith.

I want to highlight some ideas for celebrating Easter as a season, not just a day. Some of these will seem obvious to you, though some, I expect, will be surprising. My goal, to be sure, is to augment your understanding of the Christian year. But I'm also hoping that I might enrich your experience of Easter, which, in the end, is really the experience of the resurrected Christ.

Fifty Days of Easter! What Would We Do?

I'm sure some of my blog readers are wondering: "Fifty days of Easter? What would we do?" Surely I'm not suggesting fifty consecutive Easter egg hunts, or fifty new Easter dresses, or fifty ham dinners in a row. Celebrating Easter for fifty days is not duplicating Easter Sunday fifty times over, either. Rather, it's taking time to reflect upon and delight in the truth of Easter and its implications for our lives.

The basic truth of Easter is simple. In the classic litany of the church, it's this: *Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed!* On Easter Sunday, we celebrate this good news, rediscovering for ourselves what the earliest followers of Jesus realized on that first Easter Sunday. Yet the implications of the resurrection are more than we can adequately ponder on one day. Every year, during my sixteen-year pastoral tenure at Irvine Presbyterian Church, when I prepared my Easter sermon, I left dozens of life-changing truths on the cutting room floor. There's no way I could begin to probe the depths of Easter in a mere 20 minutes. So, I proclaimed the basic truth of the resurrection and explained one or perhaps two implications.

Easter tide provides an opportunity to see "the director's cut" of the Easter sermon, if you will. The season of Easter gives us a chance to reflect more broadly and deeply on the multifaceted meaning of the resurrection of Jesus. What might this involve? Let me suggest a few ideas:

- You could meditate upon what the resurrection says about the character of Jesus Christ as the Righteous One of God (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:25-28).
- You might ponder the fact that death has been swallowed up in victory (1 Corinthians 15:54-56).
- You could reflect upon the fact that the very power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to you today (Ephesians 1:15-23).
- You might think of how the resurrection of Jesus is a precursor to your own resurrection (1 Corinthians 15).
- You could consider how the resurrection gives us "new birth into a living hope" (1 Peter 1:3).

And so on. And so on. Eastertide allows us to think deeply and to pray broadly about what the resurrection of Jesus means, both to us and to our world.

Now some of my Reformed friends who are less inclined to recognize Eastertide might at this point object: "Look, for Christians, every Sunday is a kind of Easter. That's why we Christians worship on Sunday rather than Saturday. My answer is that many of us forget the Easter dynamic of weekly Sunday worship. Setting aside a season to focus on the meaning of the resurrection doesn't deny the importance of weekly Sunday worship. In fact, it can enhance it.

Some of my evangelical friends would no doubt remind me at this point that the celebration of Eastertide is nowhere required in Scripture. But, I would argue that taking time to reflect intentionally on the biblical understanding of Easter, though it may not be required in Scripture, can certainly help us go deeper in our understanding of biblical truth as it pertains to the resurrection.

What would happen in our lives if we went through each day with a sixth-sense awareness of the resurrection? What would we attempt if we truly believed that the power that raised Jesus from the dead was available to us? What difference would it make if we knew for sure that death has been defeated through Christ?

A Mother's Day Speech for Graduates

As May is a month that we celebrate Mother's and graduates, I thought that it was appropriate to combine the two. On Mother's Day in 2004, the actress Phylicia Rashad delivered the commencement address at Syracuse University. It is a simple message to the students, "go forward with a mother's heart."

Phylicia Rashad Commencement Address, 2004:

"Congratulations and Happy Mother's Day.

Time is precious and short so I'll get right to the point. You asked me to come, so I'm here. And I asked myself, "What could I say to this August body that's meaningful, and personal and true?" I want to offer this suggestion to you: The best way to live in this world is with a mother's heart. Yes.

A mother's heart is brave. A mother's heart is keenly intelligent. A mother's heart is resourceful and quick and skilled in action. A mother's heart is flexible. A mother's heart is sustained and empowered by the purity of its intention—its soul intention—to see the family through. Yes. And to encourage each member of the family with its diverse, individual personalities. To embrace the family as a whole with love and respect. Unyielding in this effort, the mother's heart sacrifices its own pleasure for the well-being of the family.

My great wish for all of you is that you would understand that this takes great effort and sustained and renewed commitment, that you would each come to regard this world and all of its inhabitants as your family and that you would embrace it with a mother's heart.

May all of your days be filled with brilliant sunrises and magnificent sunsets, and may you take the time to regard them. And just like the mother's heart, may you live in constant remembrance and gratitude for the one who created you. And may good fortune always attend you in all of your endeavors—and tonight may you throw down and celebrate, celebrate, celebrate!

The world that you want to live in needs you to create it. The world that you want to live in needs you to create it. So live in it, and create it with a mother's heart. Congratulations."



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

E. Wilson P.	May 2
Bernie M.	May 4
Valerie W.	May 7
Wilbur W.	May 10
John E.	May 14
Sherry D.	May 15
Gerald L.	May 16
Sherri S.	May 16
Frank S.	May 17
Kaleb C.	May 18
Rita M.	May 21
Jack P.	May 22



The
LORD
reigns
forever...
for all
generations.

Psalms 146:10, NIV

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Zoom Bible Studies

Wednesday
10:30am

Thursday
7:00pm

Contact Pastor Vincent to get the Zoom information.

The Real Problem with Mother's Day

By: Melissa Edgington

Around this time each year, I see blog posts about the foolishness of Mother's Day, about the lack of fairness in it all, about the gloating mothers and the grieving mothers and the women who wish they are mothers. And, I completely get it. I really do. Mother's Day, in some ways, is a hard day.

I myself sat in a pew shortly after I learned that, once again, the child in my womb no longer had a heartbeat. I occupied my regular seat that morning while the Mother's Day video played, thinking of little else except when the all-too-familiar bleeding would begin. And wondering what God's plan was for me, as a woman. As a mother.

And, many of you will sit in a pew or choose to stay home this Mother's Day, and you will come face to face (as you do every day) with the grief of an empty womb. Or a mother gone to Heaven. Or a child who is in trouble. Or a broken marriage. Or the memory of standing next to your baby's grave.

Grief is an overwhelming sensation on any day, but on a special day that's set aside to celebrate motherhood, it can be downright crushing. We feel robbed. We feel angry. We feel helpless and sometimes just plain hopeless.

And, I don't blame any woman in the world for feeling those feelings. We feel how we feel.

But, please allow me to gently remind us all, friends, that Christianity is not a faith about feelings. No, it is a faith of pure, uncut, unadulterated reality. And, it calls us to something higher than our feelings. The reality is that God is sovereign. The reality is that He knows infinitely more than we do. The reality is that He is good and trustworthy. The reality is that because of Jesus Christ, one day everything in the universe will be set right again. The reality is that there is great hope in Christ.

Grief can sometimes cloud our reliance on these truths, but they remain true just the same. Feelings come and go, but His word is always true, and He never changes.

Now, as Christians we live together in community, and we live out our faith not only toward Christ, but toward each other. We give Him our worship and our obedience and our love, and we give each other loyalty, support and encouragement. We aren't called just to love God, but to love each other—the kind of love that says, *I rejoice when you rejoice, and I grieve when you grieve.*

So, what does this mean for Mother's Day? It means that, with the strength of Jesus within us, we can turn to our friends and weep with them over their miscarriages. We can grieve with them over the loss of their mothers. We can offer our shoulder when they need to fall apart over the death of a child. We can cry and call out to God on their behalf, and we can acknowledge their pain.

We can also turn to our friends and pinch the chubby cheeks of their newborn babies. We can give them a pat on the back and tell them what an amazing job they're doing. We can honor our mothers or we can honor the memory of our mothers. We can be genuinely happy about all of the little children scampering around our friends' feet.

And, we can praise God that He is present through it all.

Problem With Mother's Day

You see, the problem isn't that Mother's Day is an evil thing that Hallmark created in order to make women feel less-than. It's wonderful to recognize the incredible role that mothers play in the kingdom of God. The problem is that our self-centered culture has taught us that what matters is how we feel.

But, the Bible tells a completely different story.

According to God's word, what matters is how well we love Christ and how well we love others. Shouting about how unfair things are does nothing for a grieving mother. It does nothing for a woman who is desperate to conceive. It does nothing for a mama struggling to keep her head above water with four little children underfoot. And, it does nothing to build a community of faith that grieves together and rejoices together.

So, don't let the loud voices out there who are supposedly advocating for hurting women convince you that Mother's Day is a sham. It's an opportunity to love like Christ loves. Sacrificially. And it's a chance to remind ourselves that our feelings are not the be all and end all. In fact, they are very often deceptive and filled with lies that mar the truth. Don't forget the reality of your situation on Mother's Day, whatever it may be: God is sovereign. He is good. And, we can trust Him.

Melissa Edgington is a former English teacher turned stay-at-home mother. With three small children to raise and a pastor husband, she is never short on stories, although she is often short on sleep. Melissa earned a Master's Degree in English and read some of the greatest literature ever written, but these days she's more into Dr. Seuss. Despite her lack of literary sense, she finds herself laughing a lot and knows that the three little souls in her life are worth more than all of the literature in the world. Melissa enjoys writing about the Christian life at [Your Mom Has a Blog](#).



A Priceless Gift

Lois Cheney in her book, *God is No Fool*, tells a revealing parable about a man who was touched by God. God gave this man a priceless gift the capacity for love. The man was grateful and humble, and he knew what an extraordinary thing had happened to him. He carried this capacity for love like a jewel and he walked tall and with purpose.

From time to time he would show this gift to others, and they would pick up the jewel and smile. But it seemed that they'd also dirty it up a little. Now, this was no way to treat such a precious thing, so the man built a box to protect the jewel. And he decided to show it only to those who would treat it with respect and meet it with a reverent love of their own.

Even that didn't work, for some tried to break into the box.

So the man built a bigger, stronger box--one that no one could get into--and he felt good. At last he was protecting the jewel as it should be.

WELL DONE,
—GOOD—
AND
faithful
SERVANT.

Upon occasion, when he decided that someone had earned the right to see it, he'd show it proudly. But they sometimes refused, or perhaps they smudged it, or just glanced at it disinterestedly.

Much time went by, and then only once in a while would someone pass by the aging man. He would pat his box and say, "I have the loveliest of jewels in here." Once or twice he opened the box and offered it saying, "Look and see. I want you to." And the passerby would look and look, and look. And then he would back away from the old man, shaking his head.

The man died, and he went to God, and he said,

"You gave me a precious gift many years ago, and I've kept it safe, and it is as lovely as the day you gave it to me." And he opened the box and held it out to God. God glanced in the box, and in it was a lizard--an ugly, laughing lizard.

Love guarded and unexposed. A jewel turned into an ugly lizard. A servant cast into the outer darkness. Life is not to be hoarded. It is to be lived fully, abundantly, without reservation. It is to be invested in love, in hope, in faith so that a wonderful harvest of lasting influence will be reaped. So, how about it? Are you reaching your full potential as a follower of Jesus Christ? When you face the Lord, will you have the joy of hearing these words, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!""?

A Little Humor

Reasons to Avoid Church

A husband and his wife arose one Sunday morning and the wife dressed for church. It was just about time for the service when she noticed her husband hadn't moved a finger toward getting dressed. Perplexed, she asked, "Why aren't you getting dressed for church?" He said, "Cause I don't want to go." She asked, "Do you have any reasons?" He said, "Yes, I have three good reasons. First, the congregation is cold. Second, no one likes me. And third, I just don't want to go." The wife replied, wisely, "Well, honey, I have three reasons why you should go. First, the congregation is warm. Second, there are a few people there who like you. And third, you're the pastor! So get dressed!"





Each Sunday in May, Louisa Christian Church will have a new worship opportunity.

With the positive reception of the 9AM Easter Service, the board decided to try a second Sunday worship service. This will be a casual, outside service that will begin at 9AM each Sunday in May. Bad and inclement weather will cancel the service. This service will feature contemporary music, a short message, and communion. This service will not be on Facebook or filmed for YouTube or the website. It is an in-person service only.

Our 11AM service will continue to be Live on Facebook and available for watching anytime with a link on our website.

We want to invite anyone to join us for this service. We are hopeful that you will think about joining this worship service if you are not ready to join the traditional service in the sanctuary, if you have small children, or if you are searching for an earlier worship opportunity.

Outdoor Worship Service



Sundays in May*

9AM

The service will end by 9:45am. Our regular Sunday School classes will meet without any change in time.

Outside of Louisa Christian Church

*Bad weather will cancel the service