

Understanding of Easter

Dan Nelson - pastor

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We just celebrated Easter and the sugar highs from chocolate bunnies and marshmallow treats are causing kids throughout our valley to get busted for jumping on furniture and bouncing off ceilings. At least that is how it is in my house since four of those children live here. As I sink into my couch with a laptop computer, a lit scented candle flickering in the distance, soft music flowing from the CD player, and a bowl full of multicolored jelly beans an arm's reach away, I find myself winding down from one of the busiest times of the year for me.

As a child Easter was my second favorite holiday. Christmas always won over any other day because, frankly, I got more presents than than any other time of the year. Yes, I was selfish and ranked holidays according to what was in it for me. I was just like you. For me, Easter was next in line because of the magic, the games, the gifts, and the candy. The Easter Bunny and egg hunts were one of my favorite parts of this special day. Over the years I would learn the meaning of both of these holidays; I mean "holy-days."

It is interesting to consider how growing up plays into the way we think and reason and live as adults. There are certain things that we grow out of. And there are other things that we grow into.

When I was very young, one of my favorite modes of transportation was my Big Wheel. It was a low riding, three-wheeled, plastic vehicle with an oversized front wheel. You may remember yours. Racing and "spinning out" on this exciting toy brought many hours of enjoyment to this young boy. It was a sad day for me when my body grew too big for it. I had already been riding a bicycle for some time, but now it would be my only ride. There was no going back.

Getting my driver's license at 16 was a monumental experience for me. It was one of the life transitions that had been anticipated for quite a long time; a dream fulfilled. But one consequence was that my bicycle now took on a different role. From that day forward a bike became a means of recreation rather than utility in transportation. I would not ride a bicycle ever again out of necessity but as a choice. These days I long for opportunities to get out of my truck and onto the trail and ride.

Examining my own life I find that my previous statement is true; there are some things that I have grown out of and other things that I have grown into. One of those things that I have grown into is my faith in Jesus Christ. The older I get the wiser this decision becomes to me. I am not trying to say that age alone brings wisdom for surely that is not true. I could tell myriads of stories that would dispel that myth quite quickly. But years do bring experience and the right kinds of teachable experiences bring wisdom. The Bible says that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and a genuine love of God and people is the culmination of it. Most people I hang around are somewhere in the journey between that starting place and the finish line. This applies to

every area of my life from my desire to see peace in the world to having genuine peace in my heart.

Over the years I have grown in many ways; so has my understanding and observance of Easter. I have grown out of celebrating the Easter Bunny and have grown into celebrating life. Along the way there were steps. For years Easter became a "memorial" time for me. No longer acknowledging childhood mythology and growing in my spiritual pursuit, Resurrection Sunday was a celebration of a blessed event that happened along time ago. It was a day marked out to remember. To some degree it still is. But now it means much more than that to me. Jesus' resurrection changes everything. He is alive today, hearing prayer today, interacting today, healing today, reigning today, and giving life today. His kingdom, as he described it, exists today; alongside the junk we see out there. He said, "my kingdom is not of this world." This is true today! And citizens of his kingdom are doing more than commemorating a day long ago, they are bringing peace and hope and life to others in the name of the Prince of Peace, the Author of Hope, and the Giver of Life; Jesus.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

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