

2021 EASTER MESSAGE

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. Easter is perhaps the most important event on the Christian calendar. Both the authenticity of Jesus Christ and the redemption of all believers hang on this event called Easter.
2. There are three major parts of this Easter event, namely, a) the passion of Christ which helps us to appreciate redemptive suffering, b) the death of our Lord Jesus Christ which seals our redemption, and c) the resurrection which authenticates all the claims and activities of our Lord Jesus Christ and which gives us the power and hope to live in and beyond this world.
3. The Passion of our Lord Jesus is celebrated from Monday to Thursday; we call this the Passion Week (actually this starts from Ash Wednesday). The death of Christ is celebrated on the Friday which we call Good Friday; and the resurrection is celebrated on the Sunday. This Sunday on which we remember the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is what we actually mean by the word Easter. In that case the phrase Easter Sunday could be a tautology. The Easter Sunday is so important to Christians that it changed the weekly calendar of the whole world, as we begin each week with Sunday.
4. Jesus came into this world doing good to everyone, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, delivering people from evil spirits and oppression, healing all manner of diseases and even sometimes raising the dead. Yet he was betrayed by one of his own disciples, handed over for crucifixion by religious authorities of his day, and finally sentenced and crucified by the political authorities of his day.
5. However, death could not contain our Lord Jesus Christ. So, on the third day He rose from the dead and is alive forevermore.

II. LESSONS FROM EASTER

There are several lessons that we can draw from the Easter event, but let me share a few but very significant ones with you.

1. One of the key statements that Jesus made when he hanged on the cross was, “Father forgive them for they do not know what they are doing”. Jesus hanged on the cross because of your sins and my sins, yet He asked for forgiveness for those who were crucifying him, those who orchestrated His crucifixion, and those of us sinners who were yet to be born. On the cross Jesus carried our sins so that we will be forgiven and not carry the wrath of sin anymore. This is the reason why we do not call that day “Bad Friday” but we call it “Good Friday”. It is good because when Jesus declared on the cross that IT IS FINISHED, He meant that he had completed our eternal forgiveness, completed our eternal salvation and completed our eternal redemption. Every human being who will trust in Jesus’ death on Calvary’s Cross is instantly forgiven, instantly redeemed, instantly saved. This is the real Christian Gospel and it is for this that we labor and toil as Christian Preachers. We can appreciate all the good things that Jesus did; but if we miss and do not grasp the redemption on the cross, or if we fail to understand what He meant by “IT IS FINISHED”, we have missed the core of the Christian Faith. Easter means that Jesus has paid the debt of our sin and so we do not have to carry sin and it’s guilt anymore. That is why Charles Wesley wrote: “No condemnation now I dread, Jesus and all in Him is mine. Alive in Him my living head and clothed in righteousness Divine. Bold I approach the eternal throne, and claim the crown through Christ my own”.
2. Easter also teaches us that with God the greatest problem in the world is not wealth or financial poverty or COVID19 or lack of science and technology. For God, the greatest problem in the world is human sin. That is why Jesus came to die. Our world will be a far better place if we human beings take and treat sin as seriously as God does. If we constantly turn away from our sins then our wealth, our science, and our technology will be a great blessing to us and to generations to come. Wealth, science and technology are very important for a better life but if we have all those and not deal with sin, all our wealth, science and technology will become curses for our world and our future generations.
3. Easter further teaches us about the importance of sacrifice. Jesus himself made the ultimate sacrifice with his life by dying on the cross. He said that “except a corn of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone, but if it dies then it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). What this means is that there can be no fruitfulness without sacrifice. We must present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God (Rom. 12:1). If we

are students, we must sacrifice some of our entertainment time to study; if you are a young person, you must invest in hard work so that you do not regret when you get older; if we want peace in any relationship, we must learn to sacrifice some of our egotistic inclinations; if we want our nation to progress in the right direction some of our leaders may have to sacrifice some of their earnings/wealth and some of our young people must be more patriotic than they are now. Perhaps one of the greatest sacrifices that we all need to make is to crucify our pride. The Rev. Isaac Watts, one of the greatest hymn writers of all time, wrote that powerful hymn whose lyrics indicate the kind of sacrifice demanded from all of us: “When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride. Forbid it Lord that I should boast, save (except) in the cross of Christ my God; all the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood. See from His head, His hands, His feet; sorrow and love flow mingled down; did e’er such love and sorrow meet or thorns compose so rich a crown. Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were an offering far too small. Love so amazing, so Divine, demands my soul, my life, my all”. So Jesus died such an excruciating death for us, what are you sacrificing for Him? Each one of us will have to answer that question every time we consider the death of Christ. All those who think that God’s work is only a means of gain have completely missed the Christian faith. Take a stand today to sacrifice something for Jesus.

4. Following from the above, we learn again from Easter that life will not always be rosy and that it is normal when pain and suffering come our way. The greatest disservice that some preachers have done to the Christian faith is to make people believe that all their problems should/would be solved on earth when they believe in Christ. This is not mainline Christianity, it is an aberration. The Christian faith teaches that we may definitely go through suffering in life but when we do, God has enough grace to keep us through. Even if the problem should stay with us throughout our stay on earth, so be it — we will stay worship the Lord.
5. Finally, Easter teaches us to hope beyond the present. Those who live only in the present are pitiable. Those who live only in the future are miserable. But those who live in the present with a future hope are the conquerors of this life. Easter helps us to do the latter. Jesus rose from the dead. He lived a real life here on earth where He engaged all classes of people — the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the political

and the religious authorities, etc. He knew He would die but He knew He would rise from the dead. Jesus lived a full life on earth with a mindset beyond this world. I have seen sick people die in agony because they didn't have any hope beyond this world. May you so trust in Jesus that you can live a fuller life here on earth with daily hope in heaven beyond this world. That is one of the key lessons of Easter.

6. There is another aspect of hope which is the ability to hope beyond any present problem. The ability to say that no problem is permanent; the ability to say that "it is not over until it is over"; the power to declare "never say die, even when the bones are rotten". Such people have more positive perspectives on life. Such people are able to do more exploits for God and for society. Such people are encouragers. It is always a blessing to be around such people. Those who cannot hope beyond present problems are in bondage and need the message of Easter. May the God of heaven give the people of this world, especially those of us in Africa, that Easter hope that does not succumb to present problems but is able to look to God for daily strength to help us transform our present negative circumstances in Africa into an oasis of spiritual, moral, social and economic prosperity.

III. CONCLUSION

1. Let us not let this Easter pass without appropriating the redemption attained by Jesus Christ for humanity through His death on the cross.
2. Let us forgive ourselves and forgive one another as Christ has forgiven us. I challenge you to intentionally make an effort to forgive someone who has offended you during this Easter. How long do you want to carry hurt in your heart?
3. Let us not crucify Jesus afresh with more sin during this Easter period. Let us learn to crucify the flesh during and beyond Easter.
4. In the midst of the COVID19 Pandemic let us all be wise and observe all the protocols: get vaccinated, wear your mask, keep social distancing, and wash and sanitize your hands regularly. Let us have a Meditative Easter and celebrate this year's Easter without the usual parties and family gatherings associated with it. We are still not in normal times so NO EASTER PICNICS THIS YEAR. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction". (Prov. 1:7).

5. I advise all drivers in our country to be extra cautious with their driving so as to reduce accidents on our roads to the barest minimum.
6. Peace be unto all who understand Easter. Have a happy Easter and stay blessed in Christ. Amen.

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Moderator

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