

An Empty Easter



There are two types of people in this world. Full people and empty people.

And if one were to take a poll and ask the question, “Which would you rather be: full or empty?” most of us would probably say, “Full.” Right? Think about it. “Full” is good.

Full Easter eggs? Good.

- Full church on Sunday? For me as the pastor, that’s good.
- Children full of respect and manners? Good.
- A home full of comfortable, plush furniture? Good.
- A marriage full of laughter and love? Good and good.
- A full stomach? Good.
- A full bank account? Good.
- A full pantry? Good.

But let’s be terribly honest. If we believe that we’re complete, that our lives are as they should be, then this season and the reality of the resurrected Jesus Christ just isn’t for us.

Here’s the deal: Easter isn’t for full people. It isn’t for the “have-it-all-together-life-is-good” people. No, Easter is for empty people. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is for those who’ve figured out that in this life, “full” is a fleeting feeling. As an example, one analysis of the spending habits of American families reveals that the vast majority of income is spent on items that need constant replenishing. We spend almost all of our treasure on food that will be eaten, gas that will be burned, clothes that will wear out and entertainment that lasts a moment.

Some of us have felt the emptiness of losing someone close. Others know what it’s like to have your health fading or your family fighting. I bet that most of us have :

- a prayer that’s unanswered,
- a fear that’s haunting,
- a depression that’s lingering,
- a faith life that’s stagnant,
- a marriage that’s struggling,
- kids who are crazy,
- in-laws who are nuts
- or a future that’s uncertain.

And the good news is that for all who fall into that category, then they are the ones Easter is for.

In fact, listen to these words from Mark’s account of the Easter story. *“And [the angel] said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not*

here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' And they went out and fled from the tomb, for trembling and astonishment had seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid" (Mark 16:6-8, ESV).

Did you catch the words like "alarmed," "fled," "trembling," "amazed" and "afraid"? Easter itself has its origin in the emptiness of heart that overwhelms disciples who've seen their Savior die, and the anxiety of mind that comes from expecting to see his body and instead hearing of a risen one.

The temptation is to look at such emptiness and see it as a bad thing. But let's not go there. The truth is that our emptiness is a great thing. Our realistic view of this fleetingly full world is an essential thing.

Look at 1 Corinthians 15. Here, the apostle Paul helps us understand the blessing of the empty tomb upon our fleetingly full lives. *"... if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Corinthians 15:17-22, ESV).*

Paul's point is this: If Jesus is still dead, then all we have is another great teacher who promised the world but died before he could deliver -- like everybody else. If his bones are still stuck in some tomb, then it means there's still no clear path to the Creator, no certainty about our life after death, and no trustworthy teaching about why we exist in

this world. If he is still dead, all we have is our emptiness.

But Christ is not dead. Christ is risen.

Since the tomb is empty, it means that everything Jesus ever preached or promised is true -- which is good news because Jesus has some amazing things to offer those of us who know the emptiness of this life. The empty tomb means that Jesus' death on the cross was a promise by God. It means that all of the mistakes we've made that leave us wondering whether or not God loves us have been put aside. But that's not all.

According to Paul, Christ's resurrection is a glimpse of our own future resurrection. There will be a day when Jesus returns and gives to us the same experience he had on that first Easter. He will bring us back to life! These are the promises that Christ places in the hands of those who are willing to admit they are empty and that only Christ and his promises can truly fill them.

So what are we? Empty or full? It's an essential question because if we truly believe that our life is full, then we have no room for and no need for the great things Jesus can give. But if we're able to admit that we're broken, needy, and often empty, then the fulfilled promises of Easter are ready and waiting to fill us up.

Sure, full pantries, full gas tanks and full bank accounts are good. But when it comes to Easter, empty is great. Being empty is everything.

Jay

Deadline for the May Newsletter is Thursday, April 20th

April Birthdays

- 2 Hoyt Huff
- 5 Matt Klimshuk
- 7 Josué Machado
- 10 Kali Parks
- 11 Scott Britt
- 15 Bessie Kirby
- 15 Chris Klimshuk
- 18 Leigh Britt
- 24 Lee Thompson
- 24 Alyna Lee
- 25 Amanda Baker
- 27 Beth Thompson
- 30 Libby Ballew



April Anniversaries

- 16 Stephen & Meredith Westbrook
- 18 Al & Patricia Taylor
- 27 Al & Nancy Groves
- 28 Lee & Connie Thompson



April FRF

Join us on Tuesday, April 18th at 7:00 p.m. for our next FRF at Antoneta's Italian Restaurant, located at 2700 Braselton Hwy, Dacula, GA in the Kroger shopping center.



April Elders/Deacons

Serving at the Table

Elders: Lee & Connie Thompson

Deacons: Josué Machado Marilyn Parks

Deacon-in-training: Rafael Evatt-Machado

Servant-Leaders

Youth Reader: Rafael Evatt-Machado

Greeter: Lee Thompson

Communion Preparation: Mary Jo Alvord & Gen Ashby

April Worship Helpers

April 2: 10:50 Reader - Jimmy Peebles

**April 9: 10:50 Reader - Marilyn Parks
Communion Meditation - Elizabeth McElhanon**

**April 16: 10:50 Reader - Pamela Evatt-Machado
Communion Meditation - Dorrie Toth**

**April 23: 10:50 Reader - Anna Harrison
Communion Meditation - Connie Thompson**

April 30: 10:50 Reader - Kim Peebles



Christian Women's Fellowship

Christian Women's Fellowship

Hello Ladies, as you know it is time for the stuffing of Easter baskets for our members who are unable to attend worship with us, this is a very important ministry in our church.

PLEASE GIVE US ONE HOUR of your time on April 9th after The 11:00

a.m. service. Mable and Martha Ann are setting up the assembly line of goodies, Linda and Jeannie and I are at the end of the line to wrap and bow the baskets.

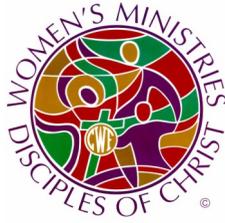
I want to be finished in an hour so we can celebrate Palm Sunday at home.

We need a line of **you** on both sides of the assembly tables. Please Help!

I promise you can leave in **ONE HOUR**.

THANK YOU EVERYONE!

Dorrie



EASTER BASKET FILLER REQUESTS

We will be making 12 baskets.

- ♦ Small bottles of lotion
- ♦ Small packages of crackers
- ♦ Small hand sanitizers
- ♦ Individual packages of tissue
- ♦ Ball point pens/pencils
- ♦ Blank cards with envelopes
- ♦ Chapsticks
- ♦ Stamps
- ♦ Individual wrapped Easter Candy
- ♦ Small bottles of cologne



Joys and Concerns

We never cease in praying for the needs of: ...

Candace R and family; Kaeden C; Vernelle W's family; Jay's mom; Karla J's co-worker; Jan T's friends; Bob H's daughter; Brookwood student, Jacob; Anna H's family; Rosie T's grandson; Dorrie T's cousin; Dorrie T's husband, Tom; Libby B's college friend; Connie W's brother, Jim; Linda G; Jim M's dad; Kris J's mother passed away; Martha Ann's neighbor; Rod B's co-worker; Jimmy P's co-worker; Barbara B's friend passed away.

Homebound: Louise C; Alma F; Bessie K; Lenora L; Eileen Mc; Nettie P; Bill & Barbara P; Mildred P; Reba T.

Reminder to Elders and Deacons

In March, we began to use two Elders and three (3) Deacons to serve communion. One Elder and one Deacon serve each side of the congregation and one Deacon serves the Choir.

An Easter Reflection



An article in the Wilmington, North Carolina, Morning Star, “Noose troubles Duke officials,” March 18, 1989, tells of a controversy that took place in the Duke University community. A Hollywood film crew had built a scaffold, complete with hangman’s noose, outside the Duke University Chapel. It was for a scene from *The Handmaid’s Tale*, a film version of the novel by Margaret Atwood.

Couples who were planning weddings in the chapel were especially troubled by the thought that a hangman’s noose could be the first thing they and their guests would see as they exited the sanctuary.

The then-dean of the chapel, William Willimon, voiced his objections to a local newspaper, saying: “As a Methodist minister, I find all forms of capital punishment repugnant. Duke Chapel is a sacred place to many of us, and the scene going on seems to be kind of a violation of that sacredness.”

The good Dean was forgetting something rather central to the chapel’s whole reason for being. A letter to the editor published in the student newspaper reminded him (and others) about another instrument of death with which they were all too familiar: “I

don’t understand what all the fuss is about. Maybe the people who are upset have not noticed the cross at the center of Duke University Chapel.”

-<http://news.google.com>. Retrieved October 7, 2014.



April 9 - Palm Sunday

8:45 a.m. and 10:50 a.m. - with SS
for everyone at 9:45 a.m.

April 13 - Maundy Thursday

at 7:00 p.m. (here with the Salvation Army)

April 14 - Good Friday at 7:00 p.m. at the Salvation Army.

April 16 - Easter

Sunrise Service (with the Salvation Army)
at 7:30 a.m. at the Prayer Garden
Pancake Breakfast at 9:00 a.m.
Worship Services at 10:50 a.m.



Finding our Future Story

In February, the Leadership Council reported that the focus of our Church ministries for 2017 will be childhood hunger, homelessness and fellowship. Representatives of the Church have contacted Cedar Hill Elementary School and offered to assist in providing snacks for children who often come to school hungry and go without snacks for the day. In the near future, you will hear more about how you can help with this project. We are also talking with the school about assisting with a summer reading camp. If you are interested in helping with these projects, please contact a member of the Leadership Council.

We continue to provide assistance to Family Promise and the Lawrenceville Co-op by bringing food and providing volunteers. If you would like more information on how you can assist, please contact Rod Baker or Rev. Jay White.

In March, at least ten members attended an Atlanta Gladiator's Hockey game outing. The third Tuesday of each month, members gather for dinner at a different restaurant. On April 2, we will have a lunch after the late service. At the lunch, donations will be accepted to go toward our giving tree for Camp Christian. If you have suggestions for fellowship activities, please contact a member of the Leadership Council.

The themes and specific programs discussed above came out of information gathered in small groups during the New Beginnings process. The purpose of these programs is not to simply provide a program, but to carry out the work that God has called us to do as followers of Jesus. Please be in prayer for our Church, and please help us in our goals to reduce childhood hunger and homelessness and to increase fellowship among our members and with our community. While you are at it, invite someone else to come help.



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One of MY Favorite TV Sitcoms ever times....

In a memorable episode of Seinfeld, the nefarious Newman has just informed Jerry's parents, Helen and Morty, that he saw him necking in a movie theater with his girlfriend, Rachel. That would not have been a big deal, except for the fact that the movie happened to be Schindler's List. This dialogue ensues:



HELEN: How could you?

JERRY: How could I what?

HELEN: You were making out during Schindler's List?

JERRY: What? No.

MORTY: Don't lie Jerry.

JERRY: (turns) Newman.

HELEN: How could you do such a thing?

JERRY: I couldn't help it. We hadn't been alone together in a long time and we just kinda started kissing and loving up a little during the coming attractions and the ***next thing we knew, the war was over.***

--Seinfeld episodes 2 & 83, "The Raincoats."