

Pastor's Perspective: What is the meaning of Revival?



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By Guest Columnist
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My wife, Melanie, our kids, and I spent 12 years living overseas. The last 7 of those were spent in the country of Cyprus. Cyprus is an island in the far eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea, near the Middle East. It is just south of Turkey and just west of Syria and Lebanon. Though Cyprus is its own country, it is heavily influenced by Greek culture. The Cypriot people speak the Greek language, they eat Greek food, and the official religion is Greek Orthodox Christianity.

Because of the Greek Orthodox culture, Easter is the biggest, most celebrated holiday on the island...even more than Christmas! For example, in Cyprus, Easter break from school is two weeks compared to the two days students typically get here in the U.S.!

Some traditions are similar to those we are familiar with here in the U.S., such as eggs and candy and pastel-colored decorations. Some are unique to the island or the Greek Orthodox Church, such as the

burning of Judas. I'll let you Google that one on your own. The point is, Easter is a big deal in Cyprus and in many other European countries.

For some, Easter is a big deal here in the U.S. as well. But, our experience in Cyprus revealed that the traditional celebrations had become the center, rather than the origins of why they celebrate in the first place. Our culture here isn't so different, is it?

So, why do we celebrate Easter? I am sure most could answer this question and point out the origins of the celebration, which of course is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But, at risk of asking what may seem like another obvious question, why is that a big deal?

Before Jesus was crucified and raised from the dead Himself, Jesus had another famous encounter involving a resurrection. Like you and me, Jesus had close friends. I love that He can relate to us in every way! Some of his closest friends were Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha.

Lazarus had become seriously ill, so naturally, Mary and Martha sent word to



Visual of the empty tomb

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Jesus. However, by the time Jesus and His disciples arrived, Lazarus had been dead for four days.

Though Jesus knew what He was about to do, the emotion of the scene brought Him not to just a few tears, but to weeping. Again, He understands us!

In her grief, Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died."

Jesus later responded, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Martha did believe! And I am sure her belief only skyrocketed when she then heard Jesus say, "Lazarus, come out!" and she saw her brother come out of the tomb alive and well! In this encounter from John 11, we see Jesus both as a friend we can relate to and as the Son of God whose power was greater than death itself!

A few weeks later, Jesus would hang on a cross, not because He was guilty of anything, but for the joy set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). You and I are the joy that kept Him on the cross!

Three days later, death could not contain the One who was the Resurrection and the Life! And according to Him, those that believe...shall live and never die! That is why it is a big deal! Because Jesus is alive today, and those that believe get to live forever with Him!

So, this weekend, enjoy the traditions. Enjoy the egg hunts! Enjoy the candy! (Sweetarts jelly beans are my favorite!) But throughout the weekend, remember the One who was once in a tomb, but is alive today! And I encourage you to join one of the wonderful churches in our town Sunday morning to worship the risen King!

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