

Good Friday & Easter Greetings!



*The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. 24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. 25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. 26 If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour. 27 Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. 28 Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, **I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.** 29 The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. 30 Jesus answered and said, **This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.** 31 Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. 32 And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. 33 This he said, signifying what death he should die. (John 12:23-33)*

Good Friday
The Collect

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LMIGHTY God, we beseech thee graciously to behold this thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

Easter Sunday
The Collect

ALMIGHTY God, who through thine only-begotten Son Jesus Christ hast overcome death, and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life; We humbly beseech thee that, as by thy special grace preventing us thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

Death is an ordeal which confronts all living souls. It is a passage through which we must all pass. There is only one of two possible means of living this life – either through the Door (which is Christ), or through the pit which is Hell. One or the other awaits us all. Christ, too, chose the shameful death of crucifixion to redeem us of our sins. He was the DOOR, and it was a passage through which He Made THE PASSAGE for all who follow Him. He forces none to follow, but affords a time of decision during which we may know Him as Lord and Savior, or be eternally lost. His death is one upon which we cannot help but look with joy and gratification for, had He not died in our stead, we would face a dark eternity. So, Good Friday was a blessing to us, but a dark and painful day for Christ. We do not mourn the death of Christ because Christ did not remain dead – He arose gloriously on the third day from the Garden Tomb. Now, believing that those who die in Christ shall enjoy that same resurrection, grief and mourning at the passing of a loved one is irrational and pointless, isn't it? His dying on the cross was the momentous and immeasurable price He paid for our sins. His resurrection on Easter morning sealed the reward of that salvation offered by His death to all who believe. Those who die in Christ are difficult for the officiant at funerals for he knows that they are actually not dead. Good Friday holds out the hope, and not the reality of Resurrection to eternal life. Easter is the seal by which the hope and promise realized. It is this realization that makes Easter so gloriously filled with joy. Not only do we have assurance of our own salvation and eternal life, but we may take hope in the same for those whom we have loved dearly in Christ.

EASTER SUNDAY

The purpose of the crucifixion of Chris was to HEAL us of our sins the wages of which are death. Just as the brazen serpent was lifted up on a pole to heal those who looked to it bitten by the fleshly serpent, so was Christ lifted up on the cross to heal all who will look to Him for salvation from their sins. The old Serpent of the Garden has bitten all who dwell upon the earth, and the remedy is Christ. Christ drew many to Himself that Good Friday on the cross, but when He was lifted up to Heaven on Ascension Day, He was lifted so high that all men since look unto Him for salvation. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.*

It is noteworthy that Jesus tells us that it is He that draws us to Him. We do not, as many charismatics seem to believe, draw Christ to us. We draw near to Christ, by

faith, because the faith He has implanted in our hearts, by the agency of the Holy Ghost, draws us to Him. As the Prayer Book Invitation reads: "...Draw near with faith.." The disciples were drawn to Christ on the mountaintops and by the sea; in the Temple and along the roads. They were drawn to Him in the Garden, and later at the foot of the cross. Then, on the morning of the Resurrection, they were drawn to Him in the Garden beside an empty tomb. Then, there were two men on the road to Emmaus to whom Christ drew near. They were forlorn with fear and disappointment believing they had lost their Lord, yet, He walked by their very side. When Christ broke bread and gave to them, their eyes were opened to know Him. Is it not so at the Communion Table. Do we not have the Risen Christ beside our very persons as we take the bread and Cup? Do we know Him better by partaking that spiritual body of Christ and that spiritual blood of His suffering?

What of Easter Sunrise Services? Many churches have adopted the pagan practice of sunrise services on Easter. Is this biblical? Did Christ rise at sunrise? Not at all – He rose before sunrise. *The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.* (John 20:1) There is something about this unbiblical observance that sounds very much like the abomination mentioned in Ezekiel: *15 Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. 16 And he brought me into the inner court of the LORD'S house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the LORD, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east.* (Ezek 8:15-16)

This Easter, be drawn near to Christ and not toward a rising sun. He is the Day Star, the Sun of righteousness – and there is no other!