

☆ Shepherd's Voice ☆

Orcutt Christian Church Newsletter



Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

The Minister's Musings

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The Hidden Side of Easter

What is Ash Wednesday?

Ash Wednesday is a Christian holy day of prayer, fasting, even if it is not a holy day of obligation. It is preceded by Shrove Tuesday and falls on the first day of Lent, the six weeks of penitence before Easter. Ash Wednesday derives its name from the placing of repentance ashes on the foreheads of participants to keep in mind Genesis 3:19 (NASB): "For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

What is Maundy Thursday?

The word Maundy is derived from the Latin word for "command." Maundy Thursday is the Thursday of Passion Week, one day before Good Friday, the Friday before Easter. Since the focus of Maundy Thursday is on the Upper Room and the Last Super, the celebration of Communion is one of most ancient Christian practices of all.

The "Maundy" in "Maundy Thursday" refers to the command Jesus gave to the disciples at the Last Supper, that they should love and serve one another. John 13:34 (RSV) "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." The washing of feet by Jesus in the Upper Room during the Last Super accentuates the theme of humility and service. Cf. John 13:1-20).

What is Good Friday?

According to the Bible, the son of God was flogged, ordered to carry the cross on which he would be crucified and then put to death. It's difficult to see what is "good" about it. The earliest known use of "*guode friday*" is found in The South English Legendary, a text from around 1290, which is a listing of "saints."

The Oxford English Dictionary states that "good" in this context refers to "a day or season observed as holy by the church", hence the greeting "good tide" at Christmas or on Shrove Tuesday. In addition to Good Friday, there is also a less well-known Good Wednesday, the Wednesday before Easter.

What is Holy Humor Sunday?

Either very late on Maundy Thursday or in the early hours of Friday, after the Last Super, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane to meditate. When he was there, one of his disciples betrayed him by leading the soldiers to him and portraying him as a threat to both the Jewish and Roman authorities. He was arrested and immediately taken before the Sanhedrin (Jewish supreme court), where he was found guilty. From there he was taken to stand before Pilate (Roman manager of Judea, southern division of Palestine), thereafter taken to face Herod (Roman king of Judea), and then back to Pilate again. He was condemned to death. He was stripped of all human dignity: scourged, crowned with thorns, spat upon, made to carry a cross through the streets, actually nailed to the cross, and finally having to suffer the slow and painful death of crucifixion on Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. After he died, he was taken from the cross and buried in a tomb.

On Sunday, the third day later, it was discovered that Jesus was no longer in the tomb. At first it was thought that perhaps the body had been stolen. But guards had been placed at the entrance of the tomb to keep that from happening, and then Jesus appeared to the disciples. It was clear that he had overcome death.

For centuries in Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant countries, the week following Easter Sunday, including "Bright Sunday" (the Sunday after Easter), was observed by the faithful as "days of joy and laughter" with parties and picnics to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. The custom was rooted in the musings of early church theologians like Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and John Chrysostom, that God played a practical joke on the devil by raising Jesus from the dead. "Risus paschalis - the Easter laugh," the early theologians called it.



Holy Humor Sunday

APRIL 28TH IS HOLY HUMOR SUNDAY

Be prepared to bring down the house with your latest "clean" joke.

Mrs. Smith was fumbling in her purse for her offering when a large television remote fell out and clattered into the aisle.

The curious usher bent over to retrieve it for her and whispered, "Do you always carry your TV remote to church?"

"No," she replied, "but my husband refused to come with me this morning, and I figured this was the most evil thing I could do to him legally."