

The Harvest Fruit

I just wanted to take a few minutes to encourage you to be pro-active in celebrating the Resurrection of the Lord! If you've listened to me very long you know I feel it's a shame that we put so much energy into Christmas and so little into Easter. Not that Christmas isn't important, but I suspect we put as much energy into as we do because the culture puts so much energy into it. And conversely, we tend to neglect Easter because the culture would rather ignore it utterly and entirely.

To help you think and prepare for Easter, here's the event and teaching plan:

Theme: The theme of our teaching and celebration is the harvest fruit. We'll be looking at having fruitful lives, and at Jesus as the firstfruits of the harvest of eternal life, and at his gift to us of rescue and eternal life.

This week – March 21st. Tim Rask will be starting us off with a look at the Parable of the Sower from Matthew 13. He points out that it should really be called the Parable of the Soils, because it is the kind of soil into which the seed falls that determines the fate of the seed and the existence of the harvest. When the Word of God is planted in good soil in our lives, it yields much fruit.

Palm Sunday – March 28th. Joseph Abrman will be visiting with us and will preach about "The King Looking for the Fruit" from Matthew 21:1-45. He'll be focusing Jesus as King, and the intensity with which he desire fruitfulness in his people.

Passover Celebration – April 1st. We will be having a full-up Seder celebration, including a Seder meal, beginning at 6:00 p.m. This will be a wonderful opportunity to walk through the same meal that Jesus ate with his disciples the night he was betrayed, and to see how the bread and the cup relate to both the rescue from Egypt and our rescue from sin.

Sunrise Service – April 4th. Our annual sunrise service will be held at 6:45 a.m. at Nassau Bay Park. As in years past, we will hear the story of Christ in the words of one who was a witness to His passion – in this case, Procula, wife of Pontius Pilate. Don't miss this chance to hear the Resurrection truths from a unique point of view.

Easter Worship – April 4th. Our regular worship service at 9:30 will focus on Christ as the firstfruits – the one who reverses the curse of Adam and the one whose resurrection is a sign of the blessing to come in which we will be the bountiful harvest of resurrected lives.

Easter 2010 Reading Plan

To help you prepare for this solemn, joyful focus in the life of our community, I want to give you both a suggested reading plan, which can be used individually or in your families, and a suggested playlist. I'll blog the playlist separately later today, but here's the reading plan, which takes you very simply through the final chapters in the Gospel of Matthew (not exactly in sequence) in the two weeks leading up to Resurrection Sunday:

Saturday, March 20th

Matthew 13:1-23

Read the Parable of the Soils and ask 'What kind of soil have I been lately?'

Sunday, March 21st

Matthew 13:1-23

Read the parable again and ask 'How can I be more fruitful in the Christian life?'

Monday, March 22nd

Matthew 21:18-46

This week we'll focus on the teaching of Passion week; next week we'll look at the events.

Tuesday, March 23rd

Matthew 22:1-46

How does Jesus refute the traps of the Jewish leaders?

Wednesday, March 24th

Matthew 23:1-39

What attitudes and behaviors earn these strong words from Jesus?

Thursday, March 25th

Matthew 24:1-51

Do you see any similarities between this chapter and Revelation 6?

Friday, March 26th

Matthew 25:1-30

How well are you using all the things the Lord has freely given you?

Saturday, March 27th

Matthew 25:31-46

I've always believed this was a parable that should change our lives. How?

Sunday, March 28th

Matthew 21:1-17

Before the teaching of those last days, Jesus had ridden triumphantly into Jerusalem.

Monday, March 29th

Matthew 26:1-17

What do you think motivated the chief priests? Judas?

Tuesday, March 30th

Matthew 26:17-46

When did the agony of sin-bearing begin?

Wednesday, March 31st

Matthew 26:47 - 27:10

Compare how Peter, Jesus and Judas responded to His arrest

Thursday, April 1st

Matthew 26:17-30

This is the day of our Seder celebration, so we'll backtrack a bit. Think about how Jesus fulfilled the picture painted by God's rescue of his people from Egypt (Exodus 12).

Friday, April 2nd

Matthew 27:11-56

Notice how widely and universally the guilt for Jesus' death is distributed.

Saturday, April 3rd

Matthew 27:57-66

Did Pilate have any doubt that Jesus was dead?

Sunday, April 4th

Matthew 28:1-20

What would it have been like to be an eye-witness to the resurrected Christ?