

*As we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too... (2 Corinthians 1:5)*

If you ask Christians what their favorite holiday of the year is, the answers won't all be the same. There might be five or ten different answers, based on feelings, traditions, and many other factors. If you ask them what the most *important* holiday is, though, I'm sure the number of different answers would shrink significantly. My guess is that many (most?) Christians would say that Christmas is the most important holiday.

Throughout the early Church, though, Christmas was not only not important, but *not even a celebration* for many. Christmas wasn't established until many other holy days were already in place. Instead, it's very clear that the most important holiday, if we can say it like that, has always been the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

This should come as no surprise to us. Looking through the New Testament – especially the Acts of the Apostles and their letters – the resurrection of Jesus is *the* central message, theme, and proclamation. Paul goes so far as to write, *If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins* (1 Corinthians 15:17). When God raised Jesus from the dead, he did more than just redeem his Son from death; God began the work of his new creation in the resurrection of Jesus.

Holidays themselves, though, are quite interesting to think about. On the one hand, they are completely unnecessary for the life of a Christian. Paul writes clearly, *Let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ* (Colossians 2:16–17). Faith is not a matter of celebrating holidays or festivals, but of connection to Christ and his salvation. On the other hand, though, while holidays are not commanded as necessary, they are most certainly beneficial. The rhythm of the Church year helps us in learning, acknowledging, and living in the story of Christ's life, Passion, death, resurrection, and future promises. What a wonderful blessing to be able to order our lives around our Lord's words and deeds!

Since it is so beneficial, both for the growth of our faith and Christian life, I urge you, brothers and sisters in Christ, to gather, to worship, and to pray with us this upcoming Holy Week. Holy Week is the climax of the Church year, when we recount the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), his final days of teaching, his establishment of the New Covenant (Maundy Thursday), his arrest, Passion, crucifixion, and death (Good Friday), his rest in the tomb and our rest and waiting in him (Holy Saturday), and his glorious victory of sin, death, and the devil (Easter). To be sure, it is a busy week during a busy time of year. But, what could be better – and more beneficial to your walk of faith – than gathering with other Christians to hear God's Word, receive his gifts, and to sing his praises for his glorious, awesome, magnificent salvation in Jesus Christ?!

-Pastor Squire

“Be with us through this season, Lord, and all our earthly days, that when the final Easter dawns, we join in heaven's praise.”

(“O Lord, throughout These Forty Days,” *LSB 418*, v. 4)