

# Lent, Christmas, and Easter

We have now entered the season of Lent, which begins forty days before Easter. It is a time of spiritual preparation for the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus, and requires a little more devotion, a little more prayer, and a smidgen of repentance.

Christmas is a really big deal for Christians. We really do it up right, with Christmas trees, nativity scenes, extra worship times, and a big season of giving. Topped off by a wonderful Christmas Eve service, with churches bursting at the seams for that one worship moment, we make that extra effort to get there.

Then we move back to a pretty much ordinary way of living until the big day of Easter, when we once again come out of our cages and celebrate along with the groundhog that sunny, wonderful day when Jesus rose from the grave.

We misunderstand. Like the person not hitting on all cylinders, who was answering questions about Easter.

So what is Easter, we ask him?

It's a time when Jesus died on the cross for us.

And?

He went in to the tomb.

Yes, good so far.

And three days later he came out of the tomb, saw his shadow, and there was six more weeks of winter!

Close, but so very far. We thought you had it.

Just like millions of people between Christmas and Easter, we have the part that God was doing something great. We just don't know what it is.

We get caught up in worldly activities like Mardi Gras, when the heathens come out and celebrate all that the world has to offer. Flashy dressers, skimpy outfits, loud happy music, and bead and glitter galore adorn the Mardi Gras parade.

Maybe we don't attend, but we live just like people of the world. Prayer fades into the background. Our languages and activities blend in with theirs, and when the church has something special, we just have something else more important to do.

Thankfully, Easter is still much bigger than Mardi Gras. Hundreds of millions celebrate Easter day, not so many at sunrise, but when it is convenient and orderly, in our Sunday Easter best, we still go out and celebrate that glorious day when Jesus did indeed rise from the grave to show us the way to eternal life.

As you open the newspaper this Friday, it is a couple days past Valentine's Day. St Valentine was a guy who healed the daughter of a prison guard, or who was sentenced to death for trying to convert the Emperor Claudius to Christianity. The world has again taken over a religious celebration and made it their own. I personally think Valentine's Day was made up by the card companies and florists so people would spend more money with them.

In any case, let we get distracted from our major point, we must move closer to God, or risk losing him forever. If we just drop in at Christmas and Easter, how will we know the God who walks with

us every day? If we just show up every now and then, how will we know the God who is everywhere at every time?

Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness with no food or water being tempted by the devil. He did not yield to temptation, being the only one who never sinned. He came out ready for his three years of ministry which completely changed the way the world worshipped, knew God, or served him.

He preached a gospel of love and repentance, challenging people who were just going through the motions to really walk with a living God who could and would do anything to save us. He now walks with us on earth, all of us wherever we go, and encourages us to know and follow him.

We are just beginning the forty days of Lent. There are thirty some days before Easter. Now Easter will arrive, just like it always does. Churches will plan special services between now and then. Millions will miss them. For hundreds of millions across the world, whether they do not know Christ, or they know just enough of him to still be a future resident of hell, it will be just another day. Billy Graham used to say that some have just enough of an inoculation of faith to keep them from getting the real thing. I hope that it not true for you, dear reader.

In fact, I hope and pray that you have a faith so deep that it can cross any river. I pray that your faith will be so high that it can cross any mountain. As we spiritually prepare for Easter, may the bad things be purged; the great things poured in, as God shows you his great love for you, and reveals the wonderful possibilities which can happen when you truly, lovingly, completely walk with him.