

FIRST-PERSON: Easter and the body of Christ

by Paul Kim, posted Wednesday, April 15, 2020 (12 days ago)



CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (BP) -- Easter is the greatest day in human history. It marks the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, as foretold in the Scriptures. In my travels, I have visited many tombs -- the burial sites of royalty in Korea and China, the pyramids of Egypt, Westminster Abbey, Arlington National Cemetery and more.

Having lived in New England for so many years, I have had the opportunity to visit the graves of spiritual giants like George Whitefield, D.L. Moody and David Brainerd. Every famous historical figure -- whether a conqueror, an emperor, the founder of a world religion, the most brilliant philosopher or scientist or even a saint -- has in common the cold, stark reality that their dead bodies remain buried somewhere on this earth.

I have been blessed to visit the tomb of Jesus three times. Whether it be the Church of the Holy Sepulchre or the Garden Tomb, every visitor to Jerusalem makes an effort to see not a buried body but an empty tomb!

For 40 days after His resurrection, Jesus walked, talked and dined with His followers. Before His ascension, however, Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit, whom the Father had promised to send.

In more than 70 years of life, I have never experienced an Easter like this year. For the first time, I was not at a church building on Resurrection Sunday. It was a surreal feeling having to Zoom in to the service.

But this unprecedented time of having to be homebound because of the coronavirus pandemic is surely a blessing that only the mind of God could conceive. It has given me a fresh perspective on what it means to be the body of Christ, the church.

As pastor emeritus of Antioch Baptist Church, I listened to the Easter message from my longtime disciple and senior pastor, David Um. He shared a powerful testimony of how on the morning of Good Friday, his father, who was suffering from COVID-19, had to be taken to the ER in an ambulance.

My wife Rebekah, who was at the time preparing to teach a Good Friday Bible Study for our network of churches around the world through Zoom, prayed for him to repent and be saved. Afterward, Pastor David was able to lead his father to Christ. After 84 years, Pastor David's father finally surrendered his life and became a child of God. On Good Friday, God was indeed good!

Easter Sunday was especially meaningful to Pastor David's father as he was able to mark the power of the resurrection in his life. And even though he could not receive any visitors, he was not alone. As one who had crossed over from death to eternal life, he was in the presence of the resurrected Christ. Even now, as our prayer network of churches around the world is lifting him up in prayer, thank God he is in stable condition.

As I reflected upon all that happened this special Easter weekend, I realized all this would not have been possible without the body of Christ, the church. Everyone in our church was praying desperately for Pastor David's father.

Even a few days before Good Friday, Pastor David was a panelist on an SBC Executive Committee-sponsored webinar on the "Scattered Church" during the pandemic, where he shared how after the worship service on Palm Sunday he had gone on a rescue mission to bring his ailing father from New York to Massachusetts.

I'm sure prayer warriors Ronnie Floyd, Kevin Ezell and many others who participated in the webinar were praying earnestly as well.



Paul and Rebekah Kim visited the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem while on a tour of the Holy Land in 2015.

Submitted photo

In the webinar, Pastor David mentioned that since we are no longer able to meet in a physical building, we should be reminded that the body of Christ, the church, is ultimately about relationships. And since we are scattered and unable to physically meet together, we have been given this precious opportunity to reboot and do church the right way.

After the resurrection, Jesus knew that He would not "be with" His beloved disciples in the flesh for long, so He prepared them to be one with Him through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. It goes without saying that for the church, bodily presence is important. But what the Easter story teaches us is that the presence of the resurrected Christ through the Holy Spirit transcends physical limitations and any boundaries.

As we reevaluate our lives and review how we do church in light of the pandemic, may we commit to one another through prioritizing relationships. Even while social distancing let us be diligent in witnessing to our non-Christian family members, friends, co-workers and acquaintances. The pandemic has shown clearly that we cannot take for granted the time we're given.

But most important, let us be all the more united through the body of Christ, His church, and live out the oneness that comes from a daily encounter with the resurrected Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is how the disciples who had gathered in Jerusalem during Pentecost experienced true oneness and turned the world upside down. This same Holy Spirit is with our churches today. It is up to us to live up to the power of the resurrection we have in Christ.

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