



## EASTER

**Sunday, March 31, 2013**

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The unit you are viewing, Easter, is a compact unit. This means that it does not have a supporting cultural resource unit and worship unit. Instead, to enliven the imagination of preachers and teachers, we have provided scriptural text(s) that we suggest for this moment on the calendar, along with a sermonic outline and others resources. For additional information on Easter, see the 2008–2012 archives of the Lectionary.

### **I. Description of the Liturgical Moment**

Otis Moss Jr. wrote in the 2008 African American Lection commentary for Easter:

Resurrection/Easter and Christmas are the most universal celebrations in Christendom. The term “Resurrection” appears in the New Testament some forty times and the word “Easter” only once in Acts 12:4, as an incorrect translation for Passover. Biblically, the word Resurrection is preferred, whereas the word Easter has a traditional usage. The word Easter has adaptability to commercial and/or marketing forces. However, Easter comes to us through suffering, sacrifice, and service. It does not come by way of shopping malls, sales, and supermarkets.

In the African American religious experience, Resurrection (Easter) is a powerful and enduring presence from generation to generation. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the central event and experience in the Christian faith. Without this event and experience, the Jesus reality in history becomes a short-lived Broadway tragedy. It becomes a movement born in excitement and perishes in bereavement. The Resurrection/Easter Celebration brings to an oppressed people a boundless universe of hope and victory.

Resurrection is at the core of the African American religious experience. Resurrection is our enduring hope. It is the eternal flame that cannot be put out. More than 500 years of oppression, slavery, apartheid, injustice, genocide, massacres, and holocausts have not been able to extinguish this eternal flame. In the midst of crisis after crisis, terror after bleeding terror, and stony road after stony road, we have proclaimed “**Victory, Victory, Victory.**”

## **II. Easter: Sermonic Outline**

### **A. Sermonic Focus Text: Philippians 3:10**

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in death.

### **B. Possible Titles**

- i. Pathways to Resurrection
- ii. Striving to Know Him and His Power
- iii. Power for Living

### **C. Point of Exegetical Inquiry**

In any text dealing with the Easter story, there are words, text, and phrases that require significant exegetical study. The exegetical inquiry raised by this textual setting reaches back to Isaiah 53:11:

Out of his anguish he shall see light,  
he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge.  
The righteous one, my servant, shall make much righteousness  
And he shall bear their iniquities.

Jeremiah 23:6, which is also applicable, says:

In his days, Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety.  
And this is the name by which he will be called:  
“The Lord is our righteousness.”

The key phrase in Isaiah is “shall see light,” the method “through his knowledge,” and both prophets highlight the word “righteousness.” These two passages show that the Salvation story begins in the archives of eternity; the Easter Story is the climax. Paul strives and seeks an insurance policy of inclusion at the “finish” to suffer and be resurrected with Christ.

## **III. Introduction**

The scope of the first eleven verses of this passage of Scripture reminds me of a sermon delivered on television by a local African American pastor following the re-election of President Obama. His sermon outline was *Hindsight* (perception of the significance and nature of events after they have occurred), *Insight* (the capacity to discern the true nature of a situation), and *Foresight* (the perception of the significance and nature of events

before they have occurred). Philippians 3.1-11 can be understood accordingly.

**Hindsight:** In this chapter, Paul felt undone without a righteousness capable of allowing him to appear stainless in the presence of God. His righteousness, which is of the Mosaic Law, which is filled with good deeds and outward observances, was inadequate to atone for his sins.

**Insight:** After accessing his past spiritual journey and concluding it felt short, he began to *strive* for a righteousness complete and perfect which would aid him on his present journey and prepare him for an appearance before God (2 Peter 3:14). “Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, *strive* to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish.” Paul strives for a righteousness, which is of God by faith, ordained and appointed by God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore Paul in verses eight and ten seeks “to know” this Christ. The only way one will ever come into a deep knowledge and intimate love bond with Jesus Christ is through salvation by grace through faith.

Salvation begins with the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Knowing Jesus, says Paul, surpassed in value all the things of the past. Knowing Christ is more than an intellectual exercise. Knowing Christ means to know him personally, experimentally, and experientially (as a witness). Paul was fully aware that his salvation consigned his death to sin and confirmed his newness in life at baptism. Paul’s spiritual journey, by exercising faith in Christ, not only led him to know Christ but to share in the glory of his suffering and the power of his resurrection.

**Foresight:** Paul took an eschatological leap of faith beyond his present reality of suffering to envision life’s end and wanted to make sure he shared with Christ not only in death but also in his resurrection. Focus on resurrection. There is a:

- Bodily Resurrection: The bodies of the saints will be raised and changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15: 52).
- Transforming Resurrection: 1 John 3:2 declares, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.”
- Heavenward Resurrection: “So shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4: 17).

#### **IV. Moves/Points**

##### **Move/Point One – Paul recognizes his spiritual shortcomings. Do we?**

As a devout Jewish Pharisee, Paul discerned a lack of power over life and death. Realizing his sinful nature, the sacrificing used in Jewish worship left him with an undone feeling of atonement. Paul wanted “to know Christ and the power of his resurrection.”

- a. We must take inventory and “strive relentlessly” to discern fault lines, strongholds, and misplaced values in our faith journey.
- b. Do we have personal power to repair the fault lines created by nature, nurture, culture, or our personal decisions?
- c. Do we know how to unleash the power of God in our lives?

**Move/Point Two – Paul strives to “know Christ.”**

- a. Knowing Christ is to believe in him and share in his sufferings, death, and resurrection.
- b. Knowing him brings spiritual alignment and establishes a genuine relationship. Knowing him is experiential providing empirical evidence for our testimony.
- c. Knowing him presses us to be more and more like Jesus.

**Move/Point Three – Paul strives for power.**

Paul’s quest was for living and dying power. His resurrection is described as the result of an act of divine power. Paul wanted to be included in Christ’s resurrection.

- a. You can get power to face tomorrow.
- b. You can get the power to overcome and finish the course.
- c. You can get the power to join the Heavenly Assembly.

**V. Celebration**

Destructive powers of the world do not write the final chapter in the book of Life. Jesus’ resurrection is evidence that God has another ending. This is good news because in the world’s chapter we were exiled and excluded. But in Jesus’ chapter we are invited and included. In the world’s chapter we were beaten, broken, defeated, and counted out. But in Jesus’ chapter we are counted in! And because of what Jesus has done and what we have witnessed, we’ve moved from having broken hearts to burning hearts. With hearts aflame, we will journey on! Clothed with power from on high, we will work together and work with God toward a different future! The resurrection of Christ gives results that make us sing, prompt us to shout, and move us to speak up. Thank God. Hallelujah and Amen.

## VI. Illustration

### Image of Memorial to the Victims of the Crash



At 7:35 p.m. on November 14, 1970, an aircraft crashed into a hill just short of the runway in Wayne County, Huntington, West Virginia. The plane was carrying 37 members of the Marshall University Thundering Football team. Thirteen of those players were members of our church, including the president of the Young Adult Ministry, Scotty Reese, from Texas. Assistant Coach Mickey Jackson, a deacon at the church, missed the plane because he was scouting for the team. All thirteen players were in church service the prior Sunday. At the news of the plane crash, 75 Marshall students made their way to the church and stayed for three days. When funeral arrangements were made, our church bus carried 40 youth to Georgia, Texas, Alabama, New Jersey, and Florida for funerals. I delivered 10 eulogies within 10 days.

My sermon title at the service before the tragedy was “I’m Going Up Yonder to See My Lord.” It was dedicated in memory of my mother who had passed 21 years ago at the age of 61 with a heart attack. At that time of her death, my brother Horace, a student at Prairie View Texas, was so distraught from my mother’s death that he quit the basketball team. His coach called him and gave this message, “If you quit now, your mother will never see you play.” She has gone up yonder to be with the Lord and has a front seat in Heaven’s Balcony.

Sharing this experience with the students inspired them, like Paul, to examine their past faith journey and strive to meet all 13 deceased players, one day up yonder. They formed a Drama/Musical Team called the *Soul Searchers* and performed 40 production of “Purlie Victorious” in thirteen states, challenging young people to search their souls, resurrect their minds, and meet them one day up yonder. Their spirits moved from Good Friday to Easter.

## **VII. Sounds, Sights, and Colors in This Passage**

*The descriptive details in this passage include, but are not limited to, the information provided in this summary:*

Paul was in prison when the Philippian epistle was written. He is incarcerated in a stench-filled place and can only see when the sun is up. Paul is searching for power as Roman soldiers were guarding him. They represented “Roman Empire Power.” The basic tunic of the Roman soldier was of red or undyed (off-white) wool. Senior commanders are known to have worn white cloaks and plumes. The centurions who made up the long-serving backbone of the legions were distinguished by transverse crests on their helmets, chest ornaments corresponding to modern medals, and the long cudgels that they carried.

## **VIII. Worship Ideas and Songs to Accompany This Sermon**

### **Ideas for Easter**

- a. Identify an artist in your congregation or community to paint a picture of the Easter message during the service. This can be a creative and powerful segment in your worship service. Remarkably this can be done in very short periods of time (8–15 minutes) during praise and worship or during the delivery of short worship thought. View these YouTube clips for how some churches creatively incorporated paintings of Christ’s death and resurrection during praise and worship.

YouTube : <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJo6P3IDjo4>

YouTube button here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LJkgHkFwfok&feature=related>

- b. Incorporate spoken word videos in the worship service. An example is Resurrection by Amena Brown. This reverent video illustration recounts God’s plan of salvation for us all.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtS-\\_UyVwPc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xtS-_UyVwPc)

- c. Introduce a less-familiar Easter hymn or new arrangements of more familiar hymns.
- d. Select music where you can include the congregation throughout the service.

### **A. Well-known Song(s)**

- I See a Crimson Stream of Blood. Traditional
- He Rose. By Deitrick Haddon
- Jesus Rose. Traditional

**B. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2005–2012)**

- Calvary. By Richard Smallwood
- Celebrate (He Lives). By Darryl Dixon, Noel Hall, and Fred Hammond
- Matthew 28. Traditional

**C. Spiritual(s)**

- Christ Arose. By Robert Lowry
- Halle, Halle, Halleluja. By George Mulrain. Arr. by Carlton R. Young
- Go and Tell Mary and Martha. Negro Spiritual. Arr. by Charlene Moore Cooper
- The Lamb. By Michael McKay. Arr. by William S. Moon

**D. Liturgical Dance Music**

- Christ the Lord Is Risen Today. Traditional
- Glory to His Name. By Al Green

**E. Song(s) for the Period of Prayer**

- Smallwood Medley: The Resurrection. By Richard Smallwood
- Redeemed. By Marvin Winans

**F. Music for Children and Youth**

- God Is Not Dead (Church Version). By Jeral Gray Sr.
- Resurrection. By Steven McCoy
- John 3:16. By George A. Pass II
- Deep Love. By Charles Jenkins
- Oh Holy Lamb. By James JJ Hairston
- I Know That My Redeemer Liveth. By George Fredrick Handel

## G. Sermonic Selection(s)

- He Got Up. By John Croslan II
- Just for Me. By John Morris

## H. Benediction Song(s)

- Lord I Thank You for These Blessings. By Joseph Price
- Walking Up the King's Highway. Traditional

## IX. Videos, Audio, and/or Interactive Media

- “African American Easter.” Online location:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4d8GKaQs4SM> accessed 3 January 2013.
- “The Easter Story—The Bible Experience.” Online location:  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTYxOgD3Jro> accessed 3 January 2013.

## X. Books to Assist in Preparing Sermons, Bible Studies, and/or Worship Services Related to Easter



Robinson, Pearl. A Collection of Christian Poems, Speeches, & Skits Written for Easter and Christmas Programs. Willoughby, OH: Holy Fire Publishing, 2005.



Walker, Michael L., Sylvia M. Berry, and Tyler Reeves. Children and Youth Say So! Skits, Recitation & Drill Team Poetry for Black History Month, Kwanzaa, and Other Celebrations in Church. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006.

## XI. Links to Helpful Websites for Easter

- “The Colors of Easter” Online location:  
[http://desktoppub.about.com/od/colorpalettes/ss/The-Colors-of-Easter\\_3.htm](http://desktoppub.about.com/od/colorpalettes/ss/The-Colors-of-Easter_3.htm)  
accessed 3 January 2013.
- Resources for Lent & Easter. Online location:  
[http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.2514885/k.63E6/Lent\\_and\\_Easter\\_Resources.htm](http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.2514885/k.63E6/Lent_and_Easter_Resources.htm) accessed 3 January 2013.



- Ideas for Easter Activities. Online location: <http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/teacher/easter.htm> accessed 3 January 2013.

## **XII. Notes for Select Songs**

### **A. Well-known Song(s)**

- I See a Crimson Stream of Blood. Traditional  
Location:  
Gospel Kids. Gospel Kids Present...Easter Praise. Indianapolis, IN: Tyscot, 1998.
- He Rose. By Deitrick Haddon  
Location:  
Haddon, Clarence. Back on the Block. New York, NY: Platinum Entertainment, 1998.
- Jesus Rose. Traditional  
Location:  
Williams, Lee. Tell the Angels: Live in Memphis. Alpharetta, GA: MCG Records, 2005.

### **B. Modern Song(s) (Written between 2005– 2012)**

- Calvary. By Richard Smallwood  
Location:  
The Center of My Joy. Newton, NJ: Shanachie Records, 2007.
- Celebrate (He Lives). By Darryl Dixon, Noel Hall, and Fred Hammond  
Location:  
Hammond, Fred. The Essential Fred Hammond. New York, NY: Big Verity, 2007.
- Matthew 28. Traditional  
Location:  
Lawrence, Donald. Matthew 28: Greatest Hits. Brentwood, TN: EMI, 2008.

### **C. Spiritual(s)**

- Christ Arose. By Robert Lowry  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #283
- Halle, Halle, Halleluja. By George Mulrain. Arr. by Carlton R. Young  
Location:  
Zion Still Sings for Every Generation. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007. #76

- Go and Tell Mary and Martha. Negro Spiritual. Arr. by Charlene Moore Cooper  
Location:  
African American Heritage Hymnal. #284
- The Lamb. By Michael McKay. Arr. by William S. Moon  
Location:  
Zion Still Sings. #75

#### **D. Liturgical Dance Music**

- Christ the Lord Is Risen Today. Traditional  
Location:  
Gospel Kids. Gospel Kids Present...Easter Praise. Indianapolis, IN: Tyscot, 1998.
- Glory to His Name. By Al Green  
Location:  
Glory to His Name. Brentwood, TN: EMI, 1995.

#### **E. Song(s) for the Period of Prayer**

- Smallwood Medley: The Resurrection. By Richard Smallwood  
Location:  
Quintessential EMI Gospel. Brentwood, TN: EMI, 2007.
- Redeemed. By Marvin Winans  
Location:  
The Winans. Let My People Go. New York, NY: Word, 1985.

#### **F. Music for Children and Youth**

- God Is Not Dead (Church Version). By Jeral Gray Sr.  
Location:  
Joshua's Troop. Joshua's Troop. Indianapolis, IN: Tyscot Records, 2009.
- Resurrection. By Steven McCoy  
Location:  
McCoy, Steven & Greater Purpose. Strivin' de Struggle. Baltimore, MD: Steven McCoy & Greater Purpose, 2005.
- John 3:16. By George A. Pass II  
Location:  
GMWA Youth Mass Choir. The Best of GMWA Youth Mass Choir. New Orleans, LA: Holy Roller Records, 2002.
- Deep Love. By Charles Jenkins  
Location:

Joshua's Troop. Joshua's Troop. Indianapolis, IN: Tyscot Records, 2009.

- Oh Holy Lamb. By James JJ Hairston  
Location:  
Youthful Praise. Live: The Praise, the Worship. Nashville, TN: Light Records, 2005.
- I Know That My Redeemer Liveth. By George Fredrick Handel  
Veggie Tales. Veggie Tales—A Very Veggie Easter. Franklin, TN: Big Idea, Inc., 2006.

#### **G. Sermonic Selection(s)**

- He Got Up. By John Croslan II  
Location:  
Peoples, Dottie. The Water I Give. Atlanta, GA: Atlanta International, 2003.
- Just for Me. By John Morris  
Location:  
Moore, James. Brothers & Sisters I Will Be Praying for You. New York, NY: A & M Records, 1994.

#### **H. Benediction Song(s)**

- Lord I Thank You for These Blessings. By Joseph Price  
Location:  
Cleveland, James and Gospel Music Workshop of America. Gospel Music Workshop of America. Jackson, MS: Savoy Gospel, 1990.
- Walking Up the King's Highway. Traditional  
Location:  
Tharpe, Rosetta. Precious Memories. Jackson, MS: Savoy, 1998.