

Our Weekly Easter Pageant

- I. One of the best ways to teach kids, and adults, is through role play.
 - A. Maybe you have an ethical idea you want to communicate.
 - B. So you get the class to write a script to portray such a situation. It comes from their own experience and their imagination. Each person has a part.
 - C. Then the skit is rehearsed and delivered.
 - D. When it is acted out before an audience, not only the students, but the audience is blessed and learns.
- II. One local group I have the opportunity to know is the A. D. Players, a professional Christian theatrical troupe here in Houston.
 - A. Jo and I attend all of their adult plays and I do some photography for them from time to time.
 - B. I attended their Bible study last Tuesday morning and listened at the players shared their various prayer requests.
 - C. Several mentioned individuals who had no positive Christian contact earlier in their lives, but as a result of a theatrical presentation with Christian underpinnings, they had started to probe the claims of Christ and seeking after God.
 - D. We could only say, Praise God.
- III. Every Sunday you are invited to a play.
 - A. You are not just spectators, but you are the cast.
 - B. The play is an Easter Pageant. It presents Jesus as the Messiah of God, rejected by the world, crucified on a cross, and raised by God to eternal life.
 - C. You participate in that play. You proclaim with your reenactment skills that “Jesus had died for you.”
 - D. The title of our Easter Pageant: the Lord’s Supper, the feast, the Eucharist, communion.
- IV. Paul said,²⁶ *every time you eat this bread and drink this cup you are retelling the message of the Lord’s death, that he has died for you. Do this until he comes again.*
 - A. Some friends wanted you to go to Galveston with them this morning, but you said you couldn’t.
 1. Why? They asked.
 2. Oh, I go to church on Sundays.
 3. Do they give you a puzzled look?
 4. Do they ask if you go every week? Can’t you just skip this once.
 5. What did you say? What were your lines to remember?
 6. Did you say something like, “Jesus is the center of my life and I look forward to being with other Christians on Sunday to celebrate my forgiveness in him.”
 7. Did you “retell the message of the Lord’s death, that he died for you.”
 - B. Your neighbor gets out every Sunday morning to get the paper and let his dog out about the same time you are loading up the car.
 1. The neighbor has on shorts, no shirt, and his belly covers his belt buckle.
 2. It is a far cry from you, in your “Sunday-go-to-meeting” outfit. Every Sunday morning, Bible in hand, your family loads the car and drives away as he looks on.
 3. You visited him in the hospital when he had his surgery, and he mentioned, “Y’all sure are active in your church. Where do you go?”

4. How did he know. Had he been watching. Had he listened with his eyes as you “retold the message of the Lord’s death.”
- C. The phone rang at the office.
1. Your secretary buzzed you, “It’s your church secretary” she hollered.
 2. Later in the week she asked you, “why does your church call you every month or so?”
 3. “Oh,” your respond, “I am going to lead a prayer in worship on Sunday.”
 4. Does it stop there. Does your witness of your faith cease, or is there a window of opportunity to add, “We look forward to being with others in worship of Jesus each Sunday, and I sometimes have the privilege of reading scripture, leading prayer, or serving the Lord’s Supper in the assembly.”
 5. Did you “retell the message of the Lord’s death?”
- D. Your children, or grandchildren, sit with you now. They are too old for the nursery. And they watch you taking this bit of cracker and juice.
1. “I want some,” they cry. “I want a snack too.”
 2. It is a teachable moment.
 3. Is this really a snack? Maybe a snack for adults only? Maybe a snack for “when you grow up.”
 4. Now is time to “retell the message of the Lord’s death.”
- V. Paul wrote elsewhere in 1 Cor., (1 Cor 1:22-24 NRSV) *For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³ but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*
- A. Our belief in a crucified and raised Lord is total foolishness for so many in our world. Wisdom and the cross stand in absolute contradiction to one another.
1. Church may make sense to us. The world sees the value of social groups. Self help psychology is very popular.
 2. Prayer and meditation even makes sense, as they have been scientifically demonstrated to be of value to human well being.
 3. But the Cross, a God who dies - foolishness.
- B. The Jews demand miraculous signs. The Messiah was to come powerfully into their history, restoring the former glory of Israel. The pagan rulers would be driven out, Jerusalem rebuilt, the temple restored.
1. Over and over the Jews asked Jesus: “show us signs.” They were saying, “do something spectacular is you are the Messiah. Prove it. Show us.
 2. Let’s have something worthy of the 6 o’clock news!
- C. Greeks look for wisdom.
1. What’s your degree in, Jesus. Where did you graduate. Who did you study with. How many books have you written. Are you a Mensa, are you listed in *Who’s Who*?
 2. Make all of this sound reasonable to us.
- D. Our identity, the center of our message, the center of our gathering here this morning, and the theme of our meal - The Messiah Executed.
1. The very phrase is a contradiction of terms, an oxymoron.
 2. It’s like having “fried ice.” It just doesn’t make sense.
 3. Messiah means power, splendor, triumph, victory.
 4. Crucifixion means weakness, humiliation, defeat, pain.

5. The savior of the world executed as a state criminal - it is the ultimate scandal.
 - E. To the Gentile, this preaching was not just out of sync, more just unreasonable, but mad, crazy; not the conclusion of an uneducated or under-educated person, but the totally bizarre thoughts of someone with mental deficiencies.
 - F. Yet to those of us who are called by God, it is our central message. It is our wisdom and power.
 1. To the neighbor who thinks we waist our day off;
 2. To the secretary who questions how such a superstition person can excel in the world of technology,
 3. and to the child who can't fathom this stingy snack
 4. — this morning's gathering and all it represents is folly.
 - G. But to us, who come, who believe, who participate, it is the power to overcome temptation,
 1. it is the freedom from the guilt of our sin
 2. it is the confidence to face whatever the world throws at us,
 3. it is the hope for tomorrow.
 - H. Just the fact that we have come together and share this cup and bread is a proclamation to the world, and to one another, that Jesus is the Son of God, whom the world rejected and crucified on a cross, but whom God has raised and *made both Lord and Messiah*.
- VI. Some would say, Steve, this message doesn't make sense.
- A. Well, it does and it doesn't.
 - B. God doesn't do things the way we do them. He is God, we are creation.
 - C. He didn't consult us to get our wisdom in the matter.
 - D. What he says is, "trust me."
 - E. The cross proves his love for us. In the cross he took care of our sin. Now he calls us to follow.
 - F. And in that following is our proclamation:
 1. (Matthew 16:24-25 NRSV) *"If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.*
 2. (Galatians 6:14 NRSV) *May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 3. (Ephesians 2:13-14 NRSV) *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made us into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.*
 4. (Colossians 2:13-14 NRSV) *And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross.*
 5. (1 Corinthians 1:18 NRSV) *For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*
 6. ²⁶ *every time you eat this bread and drink this cup you are retelling the message of the Lord's death, that he has died for you. Do this until he comes again.*