

WE CELEBRATE EASTER EVERY SUNDAY!

Easter is the Christian faith, and the Christian faith is Easter! Furthermore, Easter never ends! Really! Yes! We worship on Sundays because Jesus rose from the tomb on Sunday, and so every Sunday service is an Easter service! It doesn't really matter that we worship on Sunday, though, because we worship because Jesus rose from the dead.

You might wonder about that. Many churches worship because they think God wants them to, and this is part of their part in the bargain of salvation. Lutherans understand that salvation is not a bargain - not an agreement between God and man for God to do His part if we do our part, nor a bargain in that it is inexpensive. After all, your salvation and mine cost the life and death of the very Son of God, and that is no bargain, but a ransom beyond imagining.

As for being God's part of some agreement once we do our part, that is so wrong. Salvation is a gift: "*For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them,*" (Eph. 2:8-10).

Far from being a contract or agreement with God, an idea shared by far too many who call themselves Christian, salvation is an undeserved kindness from God, poured out upon all so that all who take God at His Word and trust Him to be who He said He is and do what He has promised to do will be saved. The works that people think are their part of the trade are a response to the gift, not a thing done to earn, merit, or achieve salvation. Even at that, Paul reminds us in this well-known passage that our good works are God's works, prepared by Him and laid out in our path that we should walk in them. He plans them! He makes them possible! He sets them before us and then enables us to accomplish them. It is like we are doing something, but it is God at work in and through us making us do those things to His glory and then God rewards us for them as though we had done something by our "free" will.

Back to what I was saying, we worship because Jesus rose from the dead. Other holidays are important too, but they are important because of Easter. Christmas, for example, is the celebration of the Incarnation of our Lord. God became one of us. He took on human flesh and blood and human nature and was born like any one of us, so that He might carry the burden of the Law, and having done it without sin, to die for us and rise again.

God being human is nothing to marvel at without the resurrection, really. Other religions have their gods taking on human form, but without the cosmic effect of the redemption of all men. If God merely became human, but it had no salvation in it for us, it would be unique and wonderful, but not Gospel because there would be nothing in it for me or for you.

If Jesus died on the cross (which He did) but did not rise from the dead, then we would have no knowledge or comfort in His death on our behalf because all it seemed to accomplish was His death. Paul wrote, "*He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification,*" (Romans 4:25).

His death was for our sins, but His resurrection was on account of our justification. His resurrection declares in the most undeniable way that His plan worked! He paid the debt! He effectively bore the burden, satisfied the justice of God and now has life eternal to give because He earned life by His righteous life and swallowed up death for us by dying in our place and paying the entire burden of sin for us.