Dear Friends,

I hope you are enjoying the beginning of spring as much as I am. I really appreciate the warm days that sneak in between the cold weather that is still trying to hold on. Soon the flowers will be blooming and the grass will be green.

I look forward to spring each year. The spring weather brings forth renewal and rebirth just as the promise of Easter brings to all who believe. Easter is a celebration that I truly endear because it fulfills all that God had planned from the beginning of time.

One of my favorite services at the church I attend, is the Good Friday service. It is rich in meaning for me, and with Good Friday and Easter right around the corner, I wanted to share why I anticipate this service with such joy.

We begin by singing songs of worship and reflection, with a wonderful message soon to follow. However, one of the most meaningful parts of the service starts when we first walk into the room. There is a blank piece of paper and pencil on each chair. We are encouraged to think about things that we have been doing that we know are not pleasing to God. Sometimes things have been gnawing at my heart for days or weeks—things I
know I need to stop and make amends for. Other times, during the course of the hour long service, I realize that there have been more subtle traces of unkindness in my life—things that I was blind to before, but are brought to my mind as I listen to the songs and message. We are then instructed to write our reflections on the paper. I record those hurtful things, even when it is difficult to admit my wrongdoing. I find this time to be one of true contemplation. I am contemplating my sins—sins that Jesus paid for when he died the death of a criminal—even though he had committed no crime. Jesus paid a heavy price for my wrongdoings. That thought sometimes makes me squirm in my chair—the payment for my disobedience required an innocent man to die.

Later in the service, we are each invited to place our anonymous confessions into a bag, which sits at the foot of a tall wooden cross. As we sing the song of refection “It is Well With My Soul” the bag is nailed to the cross.

“My sin-oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
My sin, not in part but the whole,
Is nailed to the cross, (here the nails are pounded into the cross)
And I bear it no more,
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!”

At that moment I am reminded, through sight and
sound, that all of the things in this life that I regret, the things that I wrote on the paper and my past misgivings, have been forgiven. All of the things that keep me awake at night were paid for by Jesus when he died on the cross. I bear them no more. I need not fret over them any longer. I am forgiven!

Easter is indeed meaningful to me. It is the time of year when I am reminded that God loves each one of us so much that He sent His one and only Son, Jesus, to take the punishment, that we justly deserve, for our sins and transgressions. He offers forgiveness to all mankind. We need only to believe.

I hope that this Easter season, you and yours will take time to think about the sacrifice that Jesus made for you. He did it because he loves you. Jesus came to remove guilt and fear. He further promises to renew all things, just as the spring gives way to new birth and renewal.

If you would like to take part in a service this weekend, I invite you to any of the services at my home church that our family attends. Village Church of Gurnee will be observing Good Friday at 5 and 7pm. Easter services are Sunday at 7:45, 9 and 10:45am. However, there are many Christ-led churches in the area to choose from. I hope you will find one that brings you the hope that I
richly cherish and enjoy.

Enjoy the warm days ahead, enjoy your family, and happy Easter!

*Pete Moberg*

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