

# FROM THE PASTOR'S PEN



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## DEATH AND RESURRECTION MUSIC

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I have found it a tremendously interesting phenomenon that, at least in recent American history, the “holiday” of Christmas has become the most recognized and celebrated of Christian events. Certainly this had to do with the way in which the culture at large can identify with various aspects of what Christmas seems to embody: the disposition of giving (particularly to those in need), the joy of gathering with family, the possibility of hope to come.

Easter is not recognized as much. Certainly there is a commercial aspect to it that I don't think Christians or non-Christians understand very much at all. I have no idea how a bunny that lays colored eggs ever surfaced as legend. How did Easter ever end up modifying the word bunny? Maybe I should look it up on the source of all accurate information – the website Wikipedia. But I digress.

But seriously, I have found it interesting that with recording artists, both secular and Christian, most have recorded Christmas album after Christmas album. From Garth Brooks, to Mariah Carey to Michael W. Smith – this is really important to them. So, I've wondered – why doesn't anybody release an Easter album? Or better yet, why not a Good Friday album? Do you think that would sell? Too dark and depressing?

I certainly don't want to get into ranking Christian events, like a Letterman top-ten list. But, there is a concerning disproportion of attention, even among Christians, to what is at the heart of the Gospel, the good news. What is forgotten about Christmas is that it is an event when God entered the mess of human history in order to save it from darkness. The hope that was recounted from the lips of those who saw the baby Jesus was – “he has come to SAVE us.” This was the beginning of a life that would eventually be given, once and for all, on a cursed tree (as the Bible prophesied). Christmas anticipates the “Passion” of Christ.

The old artists like Handel did not make this mistake. His famous “The Messiah” included six pieces on the Birth, 7 pieces on the Death or Passion, and 4 pieces on the Aftermath – why this matters. Bach wrote, we believe 4 or 5 pieces on the Passion, introduced on Good Friday services. Two of these survive – St. Matthew Passion, St. John Passion. The reminder of what was accomplished for us on that Friday over 2000 years ago and what the resurrection, 3 days later meant in terms of understanding that death – was tremendously important for them and it was reflected in their worship.

This is why Easter has always been tremendously important for me – particularly the service of Good Friday. It is because I bring nothing to this event. I add nothing in “making it memorable.” I can't upstage last year by giving better gifts, or being more festive, etc. It is, without any qualification, an event that is entirely God's loving and saving action for me, undeserved, to which I give only one thing in response: me. I surrender my life in faith to one who gave his life for me. And paradoxically – this dark hour is the occasion of my greatest hope and joy!

Join us for our Good Friday service where we reflect deeply on the cross. And then worship with us Easter morning, where we celebrate the joy of the empty tomb. The two are inseparable – without death there is no resurrection.

I hope someone decides to record a Good Friday or Easter album sometime in the future – I'll buy it.