

### ***“Preach Behind the Lilies”***

*“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).*

As a pastor, if you are not careful, the Sunday after Easter can feel like the day after Christmas for a young child. You remember that feeling... Anticipation, excitement, joy in the air, all the buildup... Then in the blink of an eye, it's all vanished and over. But to play on C.S. Lewis' words concerning Christmas, let me apply them to Easter. “The Christ of Easter isn't what He is to the world, here today and gone tomorrow.” But rather the tomb is still empty. Every Sunday is Resurrection Sunday. And the eternal truth will always stand that: “Jesus is alive, alive forevermore!” And Jesus is worthy of our anticipation, expressions of joy, exaltation, and celebration every day of the calendar year.

As I prayed Sunday morning behind the pulpit in preparation for our two worship services, the Lord spoke to my soul on this matter. He said, “Preach behind the lilies.” Like in many churches, we have a wonderful lady who oversees our floral arrangement in front of the pulpit. Usually marked with seasonal colors, the flowers give off a pretty view from the pew, especially during a long sermon (sorry about that). As a pastor, I get the privilege of preaching behind the carnations on Mother's Day, the poinsettias during the Advent season, the lilies during Holy Week, and an array of funeral flowers when we are celebrating a dear church member's life in Christ. In each of these moments of presenting the Word, there is a special gospel emphasis spoken out behind the flowers.

To preach behind the lilies was God's way of reminding me that every Sunday is important and needs to be valued as an opportunity to worship corporately with the family of God. Yes, Easter Sunday is special... But every Sunday for my heart as a minister of the Gospel should be approached, valued, and lived out with passion and celebration for our Resurrected King as if it were Easter Sunday. And this is not only true for the pastors and the church staff, but this should be true for all of us. We should serve behind the lilies. We should sing behind the lilies. We should love behind the lilies. We should do all that we do for the glory of God behind the lilies. Because the truth is, the lilies could be left out all year as the floral arrangement in front of the pulpit. Because every season and moment for us in the body of Christ is a resurrection season, because the same powerful Spirit that raised Christ Jesus from the dead lives in us (Romans 8:11).

And so, I want to encourage you, church, to linger on the hope and joy of Easter all year long. Remember that in Jesus' sacrificial death you find eternal life. And in Jesus' victory over life, you find the promise of overcoming death! Approach each week as if it were Holy Week. Live with passion. Live with your eyes on Jesus. Speak the name of Jesus freely when out in public or around family members who need to hear it. May the eternal joys of Easter Sunday be with you every day. Because the Christ of Easter does not change even if the season or circumstances do, for Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever!

And so, look up with eyes of faith and see that the lilies are out... And they will stay out. Because Jesus, the Son of God, our Lord and Savior, came out of that tomb. Go and serve Jesus behind the lilies!

Respect the Blood,  
Dalton Mathis