

After Easter, What?

On Easter Sunday, Lola and I decided to visit one of our favorite places: Cades Cove.

It is an isolated valley located in the Tennessee section of the national park, and it was home to numerous settlers before the park was formed by the federal government. At least by 1797 (and probably much earlier), the Cherokee Indians had established a settlement there. The first permanent European settlers in Cades Cove (which was named for a Cherokee leader, Chief Kade), were John Oliver, a veteran of the War of 1812, and his wife Lucretia. They arrived in 1818.

Cades Cove is the single most popular destination for visitors to the park, attracting more than 2 million visitors a year because of the well preserved homesteads, scenic mountain views, and abundant display of wildlife. Access throughout the cove is a one-way, 11-mile road.

In addition to log-cabin residences of the pioneers, their houses of worship are preserved. One that is prominent on the motorized route is the Cades Cove Missionary Baptist Church.



Standing inside, near the roughly hewn pulpit, I faced empty wooden pews. The room that day was bare and cold, with daylight from the windows trying to chase away the darkness of the interior.

Despite the solitude, one could not escape the feeling that this is a sacred place. Somehow, a realization dawned that the tears and laughter of God's saints had occurred here and, surely, mysteriously (if only in the corners of

my imagination), was the thought that still lodged in the cracks of the timbers supporting the roof were the echoes of the verbal petitions of a desperate people to Almighty God to send the rain to save their crops, or to heal the broken hearts of parents who much-too-soon lost a son or daughter to a childhood disease, or to comfort a neighbor in another part of the cove whose barn had been destroyed by lightning and a fire.

And certainly there were prayers of thanksgiving for a soul converted because of faith in Jesus Christ, or the abundance of the harvest in autumn, or songs of praise because of the sustaining presence and comfort of a faithful God when it became necessary to walk through that valley of the shadow of death.

(more)

It was not lost on me that with the arrival of spring and Easter, these pilgrims gathered in this white-framed wooden sanctuary to rejoice in the good news of a risen Savior – aware that no matter what their trials may be on this earth, heaven awaited. No doubt, they sang with extra enthusiasm that grand old hymn of the church, *Amazing Grace*.

Then Easter was over, and there was much to be done. They embarked anew on the journey called life, now filled with fresh enthusiasm and a renewed awareness of the presence of a loving Lord. They had fields to till, crops to plant, livestock to feed and raise, and children to bear and teach. What more hardships and sufferings might come their way, they were better prepared to face them.

As Lola and I drove away from that little country church – now deserted except for the tourists who walk through and wonder – we talked again of *our* Easter, different in many ways from theirs, and yet so similar in what really matters. We celebrated Easter at First Baptist Church of Cleveland. We gave voice to our gratitude for the countless blessings of our Heavenly Father, and we worshiped a Savior who left His throne in glory to face and endure a cruel death on a rugged cross – all for *my* sins and those of others. But thank God, He arose from the grave, and gave assurance that we, too, can have eternal life because of His sacrifice.

And now Easter 2019 is over, and there is much to be done. We must pursue our work – not behind a plow and a team of mules – in the calling God has placed on the lives of those of us who work in the mission field of loving and caring for the frail and infirm men and women entrusted to us.

Because of Christ and what Easter represents, we are recharged, now filled with fresh enthusiasm and a renewed awareness of the presence of a loving Lord.

Blessed (be) the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3 KJV).

– Beecher Hunter