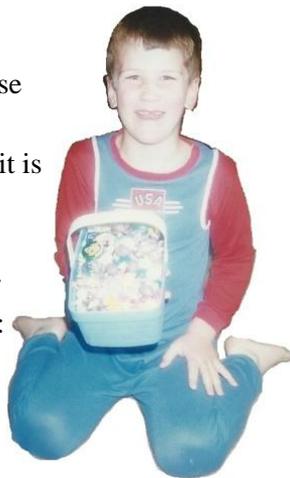


Hello, everyone. The weather has been pretty unpredictable lately. My birthplace, Michigan, is famous for having wild weather. There's a saying in Michigan that we can get all four seasons in a single week, but this past Sunday (the 8th) felt like we had all four seasons in a single day! There was a big snowstorm in the morning, which then turned to rain, sunny in the afternoon, then cold again in the evening. I hope you all take care of your health amid this strange weather.

For Japan, April marks the beginning of the new year, and that means people are graduating or advancing, starting a new job or renewing an old contract. However, for America, April has no such meaning. The school year runs from September to June, elected politicians take office in January, and fiscal years are different from company to company, so there's no such image of April as being a time of renewal. That doesn't mean, though, that there are no major events in April.

I have written previously about Thanksgiving and Easter. These are both holidays with deep connections to Christianity, but it is exceedingly common for nonbelievers to participate, as well. There is one more major holiday with ties to Christianity: Easter. Easter is the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus, the son of God, from the dead, and unlike Christmas and Thanksgiving, it is mostly celebrated by Christians.



When I was young, I always looked forward to Easter. That's because (in super American fashion) I got tons of candy and chocolate. After we go to bed the previous

night, the Easter Bunny would hide a basket full of candy somewhere in the house. When Easter morning came, I would wake up and go right to the living room to wait with my brothers. Then, once our parents gave the OK, we would start searching. By "somewhere" in the house I mean "ANYwhere" in the house, so we had to search very thoroughly: the kitchen drawers, above the refrigerator, the hall closet, under our beds, in the oven, in the basement pantry, bookshelves, if we didn't check every nook and cranny in the house, then we wouldn't be able to find our baskets before we left for church. Plus, as you can imagine with three brothers, you don't want to be the last person to find your basket.

The symbols commonly associated with Easter are rabbits, and eggs. The reason for this is that in old Europe, rabbits and eggs were symbols of fertility and life. This theme continues to the present day. When Easter comes, all the stores will bring out mountains of candy and chocolates shaped like rabbits and eggs. Some candies that are sold year-round will put out a special limited-time version with Easter shapes. One of my favorites is an egg-shaped blob of peanut butter coated in chocolate.



Easter isn't very well-known in Japan. Christians in Japan do celebrate Easter, but, sadly, there is no Easter Bunny. The church I attend has an Easter celebration each year, where all the members bring a dish to pass and we all eat together.

(I feel like nearly every single one of these comes down to a food theme at the end...)

Easter is a very nostalgic season for me, when precious memories of my family come to mind. Readers, what holiday gives you such strong feelings of nostalgia? Until next time,
- Jeff

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