

Beacons - Easter Morning 2020

Welcome & Happy Easter.

Christ is risen! Alleluia!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

I hope you've not eaten too many Easter Eggs already this morning, but have saved at least some chocolate for later.

Pause for Thought

We've now reached the end of Lent - did you give anything up & if so, how did you find it? Was it easy or tricky? What have you learnt?

Maybe you took something up instead? Praying more often, or reading the bible? Do you think it's become a habit now? Will you continue?

Neil & I had planned to take the Mean Bean Challenge to raise money for Tearfund - where we only eat rice & beans & porridge for 5 days. No flavourings or sauces. Only allowed salt. We've done it before & it's really tough, much harder than I thought it would be. But I find that it helps me to focus on just how much choice we have; & makes me realise just how much I think about food.

Sadly this year, the challenge has been postponed until the autumn - with the lockdown & the disruption to normal life, Tearfund felt it more important that we look after ourselves & eat as normally as possible. So Neil & I only did one day! Bring on the Autumn!!

So instead I just did a couple of fasting days - one to join in with our friends in Rwanda who were praying & fasting too. Good to join with them in prayer.

Bible time

Watch this clip on you tube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-M8Yesnt1V8>

What did you like about it?

Anything you didn't like?

Did anything strike you afresh about the Easter story?

Read Matthew 27:38-54

Now watch the clip again from 2.02 - 3.40

Did you notice anything about the curtain in the temple?

In Matthew's gospel, he writes that the curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. In the video it just gets torn. But actually the "top to bottom" is really significant.

This curtain separated the most Holy place from the inner courtyard. Only the priests were allowed in this inner courtyard, & only one priest, chosen by lot, was allowed into the inner sanctum. And this only once a year at the Festival of Atonement, when the sins of all Israel were atoned for (or forgiven) through multiple sacrifices.

The curtain between these two rooms was significant since it symbolised the people's separation from God because of their (our) sin. And it was a massive curtain. 30 ft by 30 ft (9m x 9m) And it would have been really heavy.

So to rip from the bottom might have been possible - but difficult; but we read that it was torn from TOP to bottom. This tells us that the choice to open up the most holy place to all people, was God's. He was the one who did the tearing.

Because the curtain was torn as Jesus died - we can be forgiven. Every single time. We don't need to wait for the Festival of Atonement. We don't need a priest. But instead - we can approach God with confidence; because of Jesus, and know we are forgiven.

Read Hebrews 4:14-16

Read v 16 again - out loud if possible.

How amazing is this? We can come to God in confidence. Knowing that because of Jesus, because of that first Easter Day, the resurrection - death has been defeated & we can be forgiven.

Now listen (or sing along to) the following song "This is Amazing grace" & worship & praise God for his amazing love & grace, poured out for each one of us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgsbaBlaoVc>

Prayer response

Spend a few moments in quiet reflection thinking about all the good things that God has given to you in his great mercy & generosity. Maybe find some foil (perhaps even from an Easter egg!) and make a cross which will remind you of this first Easter & all that Jesus has done for us. Perhaps display the cross somewhere you will see it each day & be reminded to thank Jesus for your life.

Final thoughts

I expect you've already found some resources to help you - but do check online for prayer resources during this lockdown time. I also find listening to worship helpful - preferably quite loudly (which is a bit hard for Neil! Especially as I like to sing along too)

I hope also that most (if not all) of you will have been contacted by someone from church just checking you are OK. (If not, don't worry, it'll happen, Dom is working through the list). The idea is that you have someone to chat to outside of your family, someone who will be praying for you regularly, and someone you can talk to if need be.

And a final prayer.....

Thank you Jesus, thank you for that first Good Friday & Easter morning. For those events which changed history for ever. Thank you that it means we are free. We can live in your light & love & life.

We pray for those who are affected by the virus, for those who are scared or alone, for those who are vulnerable - & we ask for your comfort & peace. We pray for our own families & ask that we can be people of peace, being gentle with those around us as we all struggle to cope with this new way of life when some days are easy & some days are hard. Help us to be patient with ourselves & with others, just as you are patient with us.

Thank you Jesus for your amazing grace. Amen.