

Easter Day Family Service 2009

Between Good Friday and tomorrow Easter Monday the great British public will have consumed 26,000 tonnes of chocolate eggs at a cost of £300 million. You may be curious to know what the link is between the egg and Easter. It goes back to the time when chickens laid their free range eggs in the Spring, like sheep have their lambs. Easter marked the end of Winter and the Lenten fast. People celebrated Easter by feasting on things like new laid eggs which were traditionally scarce in Winter. It all got a bit confused when farmers realised they could trick chickens into laying eggs all year round by keeping them in light warm buildings. And it got really confusing when Mr Cadbury realised there was more money to be made in selling hand-painted chocolate Easter eggs than real eggs about 140 years ago. Everything else is, as they say, history.

The encouraging fact is, however, that in a recent national survey, two in three people in Britain indicated that they believed in the historical and physical resurrection of Jesus. The sad thing is only one on ten also believes in a personal resurrection. That's why we need to introduce them to Jesus to see the link between the two!

There are three consequences of the resurrection of Jesus, true for all who trust and believe in Him.

1. You were shaped by God to live forever

The Bible says, "God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end." (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

That is why we know death is wrong. It was never part of God's plan for creation. You were made to last forever. God designed you in his image to live forever. But sin entered our world and has infected everyone. That's why Paul writes:

“I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable... The sting of death is sin...” (1 Corinthians 15:50, 56)

We must be born again. That is why Easter is such good news. Because we were not only shaped to live forever, if we trust in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour,

2. You can be saved by Jesus to reign forever

“Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed...then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-57)

Paul is describing what will happen when Jesus returns. Jesus died in our place on Good Friday. He took the punishment we deserve. We are forgiven our sins if we trust in Jesus.

And he rose from the dead to give us eternal life too. And he will return to give us new bodies that will never wear out so that we may reign with him.

“If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.” (2 Timothy 2:11-12)

Do you want to be forgiven for all the wrong you have done? Do you want live forever? Then pray with me. You were shaped by God to live forever.

You can be saved by Jesus to reign forever.

3. You are sanctified by Jesus to serve forever

“Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.” (1 Cor. 15:58)

Knowing your purpose prepares you for eternity. Easter is not just a belief but a daily motivation. Knowing this life is the preparation for the next, means knowing that nothing we do for the Lord,

however small, will be in vain. That is why people have often been baptized on this day because they wanted to identify with Jesus. And that is why at Easter, Christians often rededicate themselves to follow Jesus at Easter. That is why on Easter day we reaffirm our **Membership Covenant**.

We believe it best summarises how we should respond to all Jesus did for us at Easter - to enable us to follow him, to serve him and glorify him.

1. To follow the example of Christ in home and daily life, and to bear personal witness to Him.

In the light of Easter we are to give ourselves “fully to the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58) – to know Jesus and make him known.

2. To be regular in private prayer day by day.

How can pray with confidence to God?

“because Jesus lives forever...he is able to save completely those who come to God through him,

because he always lives to intercede for them.” (Heb. 7:24-25)

3. To read the Bible carefully.

Why do we read the Bible carefully? Because it was written in the light of the resurrection of Jesus.

“Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples... But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:30-31)

4. To come to Church every Sunday.

Why do we meet on Sundays not Saturdays like the Jews? Because of the resurrection of Jesus.

“Early on the first day of the week...” (John 20:1)

5. To receive the Holy Communion faithfully and regularly.

On the night Jesus was betrayed, he told his friends to remember his death whenever they ate together.

“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (1 Corinthians 11:26)

6. To give personal service to Church, neighbours, and community.

The resurrected Jesus commissioned his disciples:

“Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said “Receive the Holy Spirit.”” (John 20:21-22)

We serve in the power of the Holy Spirit.

7. To give money for the work of parish and diocese and for the work of the Church at home and overseas.

We give as a way of saying “thank you” to Jesus for his generosity toward us.

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

8. To uphold the standard of marriage entrusted by Christ to His Church. To care that children are brought up to love and serve the Lord.

Our motivation comes from the example of the Lord Jesus. The apostle Paul writes,

“just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, ... and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” (Ephesians 5:25-27)

Our Membership Commitment expresses our desire to “give ourselves fully to the work of the Lord.”

We were shaped by God to live forever.

We were saved by Jesus to reign forever.

We are sanctified by Jesus to serve forever.

On this Easter day he now calls you to follow him, to be a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

I therefore invite you to stand and affirm our Membership Commitment together.