

A LIVING HOPE – EASTER 2010

Easter is a great day! We don't always realise that, but Easter changes everything; Easter changed the world forever; Easter changes us forever. It's not the greatest piece of music you'll ever hear, the song we heard a moment ago with pictures; it's a Fischy Music song called 'Woah He is alive', but the great thing about that song is the way it changes: it begins as a sad song and says 'Our friend is gone' but then becomes a song full of joy because it is all about Easter and Jesus is alive and people saw Him and met Him and saw the empty tomb. The way in which the song changes is the way in which the world is changed because of Easter and Jesus raised from the dead.

Look at Peter: he's a great example of the way everything changed for someone because Jesus rose again. In the Easter story, on Good Friday we leave Peter feeling absolutely awful, desolate, in despair; not only has Jesus died, his good friend in gone, but Peter must have felt he had a hand in it; somehow he had helped put Jesus there; he certainly hadn't done anything to save Jesus, even if he could. 3 times he had been challenged as a friend of Jesus and 3 times he had denied knowing Jesus; it might not have made any difference to the outcome, but Peter is desolate at what he has done; he has left Jesus alone, and denied him; Peter goes back fishing, perhaps because he just doesn't know what to do next.

On the morning they go fishing, they'd not caught anything all night and just as day is breaking a man on the shore tells them to put their nets on the other side of the boat. They do and catch lots of fish and all of sudden someone looks at man on shore more closely; they realise that it's Jesus. Jesus cooks them breakfast, the best meal Peter has ever eaten because he's with Jesus again? 3 times Jesus says to Peter: "Do you love me?" and 3 times Peter has the chance to say "yes", to make some amends for his 3 denials. Restored, forgiven, accepted by Jesus all over again, their friendship is restored.

Then Peter writes about what Easter does: "*In His...*" (1:3f) Easter is about a living hope; Easter is about God changing the world for ever; Easter is about glorious and inexpressible joy because Jesus who died now lives and will live forever and will save us completely. Peter, who was full of despair because he had messed up, now is full of joy because Jesus is alive and forgives and blesses him all over again. Peter who was lost, not knowing what to do next, is now full of joy and hope and is ready to serve Jesus in a new way.

Life can be tough; the world can be a tough place to be at times; we can make it tough for ourselves by the mistakes we make, we mess things up, we forget what is good; all of that can make us feel sad, down, even despairing at time. Because of Easter all that can be changed: Easter tells us that God is strong and powerful to overcome all that is tough, even death; Easter tells us that God's love goes on and on and on even in face of hard things; Easter tells us that for all our mistakes, God forgives; Easter tells us that even when things look at their bleakest, God is still with us, still at work, still strong, still our Saviour. Easter changed the world forever; the world will never be same again, but will be full of hope, forgiveness, salvation, grace – these are God's gifts to us at Easter! These are God's gifts to us because Jesus is raised, through the resurrection of Jesus. We may not know how, but I do know that it's true!