

THE GREAT JUNIPER GREEN EASTER EGG HUNT

The Church is full of Easter eggs! Brilliant! All of these chocolate ones will be given away to people in the community as a present from the Church for Easter!

Has anyone done an Easter Egg Hunt this week? They have been happening in lots of places across Scotland, so I thought we'd have our very own Juniper Green Church Easter Egg Hunt here, today. So I have hidden some Easter eggs around the building; these are cut out ones, colourful ones made of card, hidden around the place; there are twelve of them. Can you find them? Can you find one and bring it to me? *At this point 4 boys volunteered and found all 12 eggs and brought them to the front! They were then given a crème egg for their efforts!*

On the first Easter morning, people went hunting, but not for Easter eggs; they went looking for something else, but didn't find it! The story we read a moment ago was about some people going looking for Jesus or at least for Jesus' body. They had seen Him die on Friday afternoon about 3pm; some of His friends had come along and taken His body down from cross, but because it was late they didn't have time to put all the spices and perfumes on it that they wanted to put on it, so they put Jesus in a little cave in a rock and said they would come back on Sunday morning.

It was Sunday morning and they came looking for Jesus' body; they came to the little cave in the rock and expected to find that it was still blocked up; the soldiers had put a huge stone over it on Friday night. But the stone was rolled away and so the women who had come looking dared to have a quick look inside. What did they find? Nothing! There was nothing there! Well, there were some bits of cloth there, cloth that the body had been wrapped in, but nothing else; no Jesus! What now? Where would they look next? They went to get help to find Jesus, but the others who came couldn't find Him either. They didn't know what to do.

Some went home; some were still confused; Mary was left on her own, wondering where would she find Jesus. Just then someone came to speak to her; we'll read the story in a minute, but Jesus found her! She had no idea where to find Jesus, but Jesus came to find her and show her that He is alive. Ever since, Easter has been a real celebration – Jesus is alive, risen from dead; we don't know how, we just know that He is!

AN EASTER ROLLERCOASTER

Have you ever been on a roller coaster; the nearest I've been was on a YouTube video last week; even that made me ill! What does roller coaster do? It goes up and down; it turns you upside down and round and round; one minute you are up in the air, the next minute you are nearly touching the ground again; all you can do is scream!!

Easter week for the people involved was a bit like that kind of thing, emotionally.

Up: Palm Sunday was great! It was a day when everyone was happy; it was a great celebration, Jesus is King and He's going to be King for ever; the world is a great place for the followers of Jesus; they are cheering and shouting and having a great time.

Twisted round – then Jesus says that He's going to die and His friends are not sure anymore; they thought everything was great, but not if He's going to die; they are confused about what Jesus is doing; some of them thought He was wrong; Judas agreed to betray Him; Peter was too frightened to own up to being Jesus' friend.

Down – it is Friday, His friends had seen Jesus be arrested and then He had been beaten up by the soldiers, made to wear a crown of thorns, laughed at; then finally He was crucified and died in an awful way; His friends thought this was the end of everything; they were really sad; their hopes had gone; He would never be King now, never be Saviour now.

Twisted around again – it is Easter Sunday and they had come looking for Jesus, but the tomb is empty. They didn't understand what had happened, they are confused; Mary is in tears as she stands outside the little cave because she thinks someone has taken Jesus' body away and she just wants Him back so that she can take care of Him now that He's dead. She is confused; she doesn't know what's going on and when the man she thinks is the gardener speaks to her, she is no better.

Up – she met Jesus; He's alive! Wow! What a delight! Great news! She can't wait to tell the others; Jesus is alive! She doesn't know how or why, but she knows it's true because she's seen Him, she's almost touched Him; she spoke to Him and He spoke to her. Later, all of Jesus' friends met Him as well and they saw that He's alive and they were overjoyed when they saw Him.

When we read these Easter stories, they make us feel sad to read that Jesus suffered and died; these stories make us confused because we don't understand everything that's happening here; but they also should make us happy for two reasons: 1) Jesus is alive and always will be alive; 2) Jesus did all of this to be our Saviour; because of Easter, Jesus is our Saviour forever.

AN INDESTRUCTIBLE LIFE Hebrews 7:23-35

I have a squeezy stress ball; perhaps you've had these magic candles; or the toy that you can't push over? These things are indestructible, they keep bouncing back! You can try to blow out the candles, but they keep relighting; you can push over the toy, but it comes back up again; no matter how hard squeeze the ball, it will always go back to its old shape.

The great story of Easter is that Jesus is alive! He who died is alive and His friends were delighted, overjoyed. His friends knew, once He was alive, that He really was their Saviour; He died to take away sin and was raised to guarantee it! They knew that their sins were forgiven because Jesus rose from the dead! They knew for sure that He was their Lord and King because He was raised from dead, because He is alive!

2000 years later, we still call Jesus Lord; we still trust Jesus as our Saviour, we still look to Him for peace, hope, forgiveness; we still try to follow Him and be the kind of people He wants us to be. Why? Because of His indestructible life. He lived and died and rose again and because He rose from the dead He will never, ever die again; because of His indestructible life, all the things that He promised to us, He is always able to do. He will never die again and so we have a Saviour who is indestructible; we can't see Him, but He is there, always and for ever.

Because He lives, He is able to save us completely. All of our sins are forgiven completely; all the things we have done wrong in the past are completely forgotten by God, they are gone from His memory because of what Jesus has done and so He forgives us totally. We are God's friends and we always will be God's friends

because of Jesus. We are God's children and He loves us and He always will because of Jesus. We have hope that one day we will be with Jesus in heaven and share His glory and we always will have that hope because of Jesus. Even in the day-to-day circumstances of life: "With Him as ... supporting us by His strength and surrounding us with His love, there is no force that can daunt us or overpower us." (Hughes)

Nothing of that goes away, or changes, or fades; 2000 years after Jesus died and rose again, these things are still as true as ever, they are still for us, these are still the gifts that God gives to us and nothing will change that ever. Why? Because of Jesus' indestructible life; He will never die again; He will live for ever and so all the promises God has made to us will come true; all the hopes of the Bible, all the good things the Bible tells us that we have and that Jesus does – all of that will come true because of Jesus and His indestructible life.