

## EASTER 2017

### All kinds of emotions

Have you ever been on a roller coaster – Do you love them? Do you hate them? how does it feel? They tell me it is exhilarating, fantastic, wonderful; but is there a moment when you're scared? Anyone been scared on a roller coaster? Has being scared changed to actually enjoying it? Perhaps being scared is part of the excitement!

There are other days like that? Your first day at school, or your first day at a new school – you are petrified, but later really enjoyed it; you will go back!

Your first day at work – you're not sure what will happen and are a bit scared, and excited at the same time; it worked out fine.

Getting married; having a baby; there are all sorts of experiences that make us scared, but excited at the same time!

Easter is full of this mixture of emotions. The women who went to the tomb on that Sunday morning were perhaps scared, maybe disappointed because they had hoped that Jesus would be King, maybe angry at the Chief Priest and Pilate for having Jesus killed, maybe confused by all that had happened? "He is not here" – that's the first thing that the angel says to the women; "I know you're looking for Jesus; He is not here" and if we stop there... What a shock! He's not here! Then where is He? What's happened? We put Him here on Friday night; we watched as He was laid in the cave, dead, and we were sad then because He has died and now He's not here; where is He? What has happened? Has someone stolen His body?

"He has risen" – that's not any easier to understand. Jesus had promised that He would rise from the dead, but His friends didn't really believe Him; they weren't sure what that would mean. Now the angel is telling them that this is what has happened. He is not here; He is risen, alive and that's why He is not here!

"afraid yet filled with joy" – can you be both at the same time? It is all very confusing! It was a very mixed up morning that Sunday morning in Jerusalem. Something has happened and they are afraid because they don't really understand what is going on! But then they meet Jesus, alive and they begin to discover that something amazing and magnificent has happened; Jesus, whom they watched die on Friday, is alive, talking to them, walking with them and later even eating with them! On Sunday morning they are "afraid yet filled with joy" and all of these emotions were going around in their heads and hearts.

Easter does same for us. It is a great day, a day of joy and hope. The Bible doesn't tell us the story of the resurrection, but of the discovery that Jesus is alive. We're perhaps still not quite sure what happened, but the women and others tell us that Jesus is alive. Are we confused? Are we full of joy? Are we afraid? Are we full of excitement? Or full of questions? Is there hope in our hearts? There are all sorts of emotions, and at the heart of it all Jesus is alive!

### Moments when everything changes!

Do you know the story of the very hungry caterpillar? It starts with an egg on a leaf; Then he eats lots of food. On Saturday, he has a stomach-ache! Then he goes into a cocoon; in the end comes out as a beautiful butterfly! The caterpillar has totally changed from being a caterpillar to being a butterfly; from being green and crawling to lots of colours and flying. This is the time when everything changes for the caterpillar; he never goes back to being a caterpillar.

Easter is a moment when everything changes for Jesus: He has lived His life, has loved people and has done amazing things for people, but then He died on cross; He gave up His life on the cross and died. Easter Sunday everything changed with the resurrection. Jesus is changed, He becomes a new person, able to appear and disappear, ready to share God's glory again and go back to heaven. Because everything changes for Jesus, everything

changes for the world as well. Now, we have a Saviour; now we are forgiven all the faults we have and all the mistakes we make; now we are God's friends; now we have hope that one day we'll share Jesus' glory with Him in heaven. Everything has changed for the world because of Easter.

Fraser read for us a very small part of the story of one man who was changed. His name was Cornelius and he had heard about Jesus and he had heard that Peter could tell him all about Jesus. Cornelius wanted to hear about Jesus and so he invited Peter to come to his house. "Tell me the story" and so Peter did. Peter told Cornelius about Jesus being crucified and that Jesus had died; then Peter told him that God raised Jesus from the dead and that lots of people saw Jesus after the resurrection and all of these people could tell him about it if he wanted. Now, said Peter, our job is to tell people this story so that people like you can believe in Jesus and find the blessing of God on your life.

Cornelius loved what he heard about Jesus and as Peter was speaking the Spirit of God filled Cornelius's heart and he became Christian; at that moment, life for Cornelius was totally changed. He believed; he put his trust in Jesus and life was never the same again. He lived his life for Jesus. From that moment, everything was changed. We hear the story of Easter, and hear that Jesus died and was raised: it is a story that changes our lives when we believe, when put our trust in Jesus and live our lives for Him.

### **A Resurrection life**

Easter is a great day! It is a day full of hope; we sing songs full of joy and hope; there are no sad songs for Easter; this is the day of resurrection! Easter is the day when we celebrate that Jesus is alive, and that He is a great king and that He is the Son of God and that even if we don't understand everything about the story, we get it! We get that it brings joy and hope to the world even when the world is weary and dark. Easter is a great day and it changes the world.

But can't get to Easter without Good Friday. The road to Easter and its joy and hope runs through the cross and its sadness and struggle. Let's go back to our caterpillar to butterfly story – the way for the caterpillar to become a butterfly is by the cocoon and sometimes it is a bit of a struggle for the butterfly to get out of the cocoon; it gets there in the end, but it is not always easy. The story is told of someone who watched a butterfly struggle to get out of its cocoon and wanted to help, so he cut open parts of the cocoon that held the butterfly in and out it came. But when the butterfly came out completely it couldn't fly properly; its wings were not strong enough to allow it to fly. The struggle to come out of the cocoon was all part of the transformation, and helped it build up the strength in its wings. Jesus overcame pain and struggle in order to be our Saviour. Resurrection is only full of hope and joy because the cross came first; we can only really celebrate Jesus being raised because first of all He died.

The same thing happens in us. "*You died... You were raised...*" (*Colossians 3:1ff*) This is not a physical thing, but a spiritual thing. "*You died...*" to your desire to be master of your own universe, to be master of your own life, to do whatever you like, to ignore God and have own ambitions, to allow your desires to run unchecked, to squander and waste the good things of life and to ignore God, to think selfishly and to leave God out of picture. We die to all of that; we say that all of that has been a waste and we want to put all of that behind us. "*You were raised...*" a new kind of life takes its place: life with Jesus at centre, Jesus is Lord and He shapes our lives; we live life in His ways, we try to shape the ways we think by what He teaches; we try to learn to trust Jesus and to pray and to read the Bible and to be the kind of people Jesus wants us to be, to love God heart and soul and to love other people.

Easter happens *for* us: when Jesus died and rose again He did it for us, to be our Saviour and so we are blessed by what Jesus did for us; we are loved despite everything. Easter happens *to* us: we are changed because of Easter, life is different for us, we are full of hope,

forgiveness, peace, grace, our hurts and wounds are healed and so life for us is different because of what Jesus did. Easter happens *in* us: we are different people, people living a resurrection life, life centred on Jesus and on faith and on love for God and for other people; life is shaped by Jesus, the king of our lives. Resurrection only happens after the cross: Jesus was raised after the struggle of Calvary; we believe but often after lots of fears, doubts, and questions; we live a resurrection life inspired by Jesus, and are given power and strength by the Spirit, but we still struggle to be the right kind of people. Easter happens for us, to us and in us; what a great day Easter is; God has raised Jesus from the dead to live for ever; how marvellous, how wonderful; we praise God for His power and endless love!