

EASTER SUNDAY

What's the Message?

There were two messages to pass around and some people came to help; after each message we reflected on the questions below:

What is the message?

Did you believe the message? Why/Why not?

What would make you believe the message?

The first message: the minister has a hole in his sock.

The second message: Jesus is alive.

We've just done something that happened on Easter Sunday in Jerusalem. People started saying that Jesus is alive and telling others. The angel told the women; the women told the disciples; the disciples told other disciples! Did they believe? We're not sure at first; they're not sure whether to believe or not. Some had seen the empty tomb; Jesus is not there, but still they don't totally understand. Some believe because other people told them, people they trusted. Most of all, they believed because they met Jesus: they saw Him, they touched Him, they spoke to Him, they heard Him, they ate with Him and all of these appearances convinced people that it was true – they saw and they believed. We believe because those who saw told others and finally the story was written down! We believe because the Spirit of Jesus persuades us that it's true and good.

What do you see?

We showed some pictures from funny angles, or small pieces of pictures; what do you see? Then we showed the whole picture, or the same picture from the normal angle – were we right?

What did Peter see? He saw a tomb that was empty; he saw strips of linen, the bandages which had been used to wrap up Jesus' body; he saw them lying on the floor of the cave. To start with, that is all he saw. What did it mean? Later, Peter saw Jesus, alive and began to believe.

Thomas: what did he see? Nothing! On Easter Sunday evening, the story goes, Jesus' friends were in the room and the doors and windows were locked and Jesus just appeared and they rejoiced to see Him, alive. What did Thomas see? Nothing – he wasn't there for some reason; he said he would only believe when he saw. On the next Sunday evening, Jesus appeared again and this time Thomas was there and he did see and he believed.

Jesus said to Thomas: *"because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen me and yet have believed."* (John 20:29)

Forgetting and Remembering

What's the most important thing you've forgotten? To do your homework for school? Where you left your glasses? Where you left the car in the car park? Where you're your tickets for the cup final or that concert you've been looking forward to? To renew

the road tax on your car? Your wedding anniversary or someone's birthday? We all forget things from time to time, some more important than others! It doesn't feel good when you realise that you've forgotten something important! How did you remember? Walking into school, there's something nagging at the back of your mind that you've forgotten something; there's a light-bulb moment and you suddenly remember what it was; or someone asks you how you got on with the maths and what was your answer to Q.4; you are then frantically trying to do the homework before school begins! You empty all the drawers in the kitchen till you find the tickets. Most likely, someone says something – did you send a card? Did you renew the road tax? Your glasses are on top of your head!

People in the Easter story forgot some important things:

- The Women who went to Jesus' tomb on Easter morning: they found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty; the angels are there to tell them what had happened; *"Remember how..." (Luke 24:6f)* They'd forgotten! So they were sad; they didn't understand what was happening because they'd forgotten what Jesus had said; He had told them this would happen, that He would die and be raised. They went off and reminded the others; they told the disciples!
- The two people going back to Emmaus: they are walking sadly home because all their hopes were dashed; Jesus was dead and they had heard rumours of His missing body, but they are not sure. Then Jesus walks alongside them, but they do not recognise Him and as they talk, it is clear that they'd forgotten, not only Jesus' words but all the Bible words that promise His coming. Because they'd forgotten, they are sad and downcast; then Jesus reminds them and their hearts burn within them as he reminds them of what the Bible says. Then all of a sudden Jesus is gone!

What makes them remember?

"remember..." "Beginning with Moses..." (Luke 24:6, 27) The angels and then Jesus Himself remind them of His words and of the Bible promises and they remembered and when they remembered, everything fell into place. The women went off to tell the others what they had seen and heard; remembering Jesus' words made all the difference. The two people on the road to Emmaus said that their hearts were burning with joy and faith as Jesus reminded them of the Bible words and then they recognised Him. They remember because someone reminded them! Remembering these words changed their whole day: they began sad and lost; the day ended full of joy and delight and with hope in their hearts because they knew that Jesus is alive.

"I want to remind you..." (1 Corinthians 15:1) "...of so many important things to make your faith stronger". We know the story but forget what the story means; let me remind you. Easter is good news for us; it means - that our sins are forgiven; that Jesus is with us always and everywhere; that Jesus is able to save us completely; that we need not be afraid of death because we have the hope of life; that God answers our prayers. All of these are true because Jesus died and was raised. What's the most important thing to remember today? Jesus is raised from the dead; this is Easter and Jesus lives!