

Easter Sunday

EASTER E G G

We have a large Easter Egg in 3 pieces, stuck to a board or in this case a chair! Each piece has a letter, spelling 'EGG'.

There are lots of Easter eggs here, and the display looks brilliant; thank you very much for bringing them, and they will be taken to people in the community afterwards.

Easter eggs: for a long time Christians have decorated eggs and then rolled them to remind us of the story of Easter. Easter eggs now come in all kinds; I have this large Egg; I know it is an egg because it says so on it!

E- what do you normally do with Easter eggs? Eat them! Don't eat them all at once, but have a bit at a time. Then enjoy! *Take off the E*

G- how do they taste? Good, Goopy; great. What 'G' describes a person who eats all of their Easter Eggs at once? Greedy or glutton. What 'G' is how you feel if you've eaten all your eggs at once? Groan! - *Take off bottom G.*

G- what happens to the egg – it is 'gone'; there is no egg-shape left, just this bit in middle; you've eaten it, you've enjoyed it; it has tasted really good; now it is gone! The egg has disappeared!

I'm going to make it reappear in a minute, so that my Easter egg tells us the Easter story, the story of what happened on the Sunday morning at the first Easter. 'G' shape is round like the stone that was put over the front of Jesus' tomb and that on Easter Sunday had been rolled away to help people discover the resurrection. Let's put the egg back together again!

G - gone; Jesus' body was gone; there was nothing there, only the cloths that the body had been wrapped up in. The women who saw it first didn't understand and even when the angel said "*He's not here; He has risen*" they still were not sure. "*Afraid yet filled with joy...*"

E - ever; Christians believe that because of Easter Jesus lives for ever; He will not die again; He is alive again at Easter never to die again and will always be able to be our Saviour. The gospel tells us that we will live for ever with Jesus; we're not always sure what that means, but that's Jesus' promise!

G - Good - what He did at Easter was for our good. It didn't seem good at one stage; it seemed horrible and bad, but the Easter story is all about good coming out of something bad, so that because Jesus lives for ever, He is able to do us good always. Another 'G': Glorify - what Jesus did was to glorify God; this was not for Himself, but to do us good and to do what God wanted

A MESSY WORLD SAVED

Let me tell you story of the picture that can be seen it on the wall of the coffee room.

It was made for Messy Church when we talked about Messy Easter a few weeks ago, to help us understand what Jesus did for us and why Easter is so important.

I began with a picture of the world, the good world with so many things for us to enjoy; it is God's world, He made it and it was good; He made us and it was very good. We are made to love God and to look after the world for Him. People do lots of good things in the world, to love God and to love and care for others and in lots of ways the world is a great place.

But, then I spattered paint across the world to mess up the world. The world is a messy place and we have made it messy. Instead of doing good things, people do bad things, we get things wrong, we fall out with each other; we forget about God altogether and go own way. We also forget to look after the world in which we live and we make a mess of it, just like I did with the paint. The world is a messy place and the Bible calls this sin: We have forgotten God and have done and said all kinds of wrong and bad things. What to do?

God had a plan to sort out this messy world. He would send Jesus! He sent Jesus and Jesus came into the world and started doing good things, helping people, teaching truth, showing people how to live our lives in a good and right way. But the real reason for His coming is to sort out this messy world and God's plan was for Jesus to do that by dying on the cross. When He died on the cross, Jesus took all these bad and wrong things on Himself, as if He has done them all Himself and now God has saved and rescued us. We are forgiven by God for our faults and mistakes; Jesus brings peace and hope to our lives.

Our messy world is saved and rescued because Jesus died on the cross and is raised from the dead. The cross is God's plan to rescue our messy world and it works!

THINKING EASTER

Do you have curtains in your house? What colour or design? *There were a few answers: Dennis the Menace, Star Wars etc.* What do curtains do? They keep something out: I draw the curtain or the blind in my study some days to keep out the sun so that I can see my computer screen; it always seems a shame, but what can you do? They keep the darkness out at night. They are also about keeping something in: we draw the curtains at night and get the feeling of being kept safe from the darkness or the cold outside; a curtain can make a space that is your space and no-one else comes inside unless you ask.

There is a curtain in the Easter story! Let me take you into the Temple in Jerusalem, a splendid building made with the best stone, carved in fantastic ways, covered in gold and dazzling in the sun. It is a busy place because of a special festival time at the Passover and people from all over the world are in Jerusalem for this festival and the centre of that festival is the Temple. The temple is made up of lots of courtyard spaces: the first of these is called "The Court of the Gentiles" and anyone can go in there to pray, though Jesus was cross because it was too noisy with other things! The second space is called "The court of the women" where Jewish women could go to pray. Next was "The court of Israel" and Jewish men were allowed in here. The very centre of the temple, the Most Holy Place, was next; it was the place where

God's presence was to be found, the Holy of Holies. There was a curtain over the doorway. It kept people out: they believed that this place was too special for people to go in, so the curtain kept them out and only one man, the High Priest, could go inside and then only once in the year and take a sacrifice into the Holy of Holies, into the presence of God; the people were kept out by the curtain.

At very the moment Jesus died on Good Friday, that curtain was torn into two pieces from top to bottom. It symbolized something that Jesus did. We are not to be kept out any longer, but God invites everyone of us to come near to Him in faith and in prayer. God is not someone to be afraid of, but to love; God is someone to trust, someone who loves us and wants to listen to our prayers. Paul in Colossians chapter 3 talks about this connection we have with Jesus because of Easter: we are connected to Jesus and something happens to us because of Easter. By our Christian faith something in us dies: the me-centred life dies, our forgetting of God dies. By our Christian faith something in us comes alive: love for Jesus comes alive, a desire to do what Jesus wants, a sense of God being with us come alive, knowing that Jesus loves us comes alive. "*Set your...*" (*Colossians 3:1*) We need to think as if that were true; set your minds on the things of Jesus; change way you think about life, no longer with "me" at the centre, but with Jesus at the centre, no longer afraid of God; no longer feeling guilty for our faults, no longer in despair, but knowing that we are forgiven, that God loves us, and so we know that there is hope for us. We are invited in.

A man came to famous preacher after church looking for help. He was troubled about life and how hard life was. He had been in the Navy in World War 2, and had served in submarines. His submarine had been in the Mediterranean Sea and was sunk and went to bottom of the sea and he told how awful it was and how he had felt trapped; and that was the end of his story. The preacher asked him to tell the story again and the man stopped at the same point. "Tell me the rest of the story"; "there is no more!" "Are you still at bottom of sea?" asked the preacher. The man was thinking and living as if he were still trapped and he had not ever lived as if he had been rescued. We feel guilty; we think life is hopeless; we are afraid of God. We're not thinking Easter! Easter and Christian faith takes away guilt for sin and we are forgiven. Because Jesus lives there is hope for every situation. God is with us. Thinking Easter transforms your life. "*set your...*" (*Colossians 3:2a, 3b*) The curtain is torn in two; God invites us in; Jesus takes us in; think Easter; life begins at Easter.