

// Today is the most wonderful day for us! This is the day we remember Christ's resurrection from the grave. The day He defeated death, having lived a sinless life, making a way for us to be completely redeemed. Everything that had gone before, all the laws, all the rules that were necessary to be made pure in God's sight, were put in the past.

This is the day we celebrate the gospel of grace. Throughout the old testament, the Jews needed to satisfy very specific rituals and practices, but from this very point in history all anyone needs to do is to believe that Christ died for their sins, and live a life that worships Him and seeks His kingdom.

It's such a simple message, and yet it's so hard for so many to understand. In fact, over time as Christians, we can very easily be tempted to stop trusting God's grace, and try to do good things which we feel will justify us. But the justification has already been done.

When we let God down, or forget to trust Him, all we have to do is come back to Him and say sorry. It doesn't tire God out - He is the one who rescued us, and is always ready and waiting for us to keep coming back to Him.

But it's so, so easy to forget. Jesus's disciple, Peter, was so passionate around Jesus. He was so keen to see Jesus made Lord publicly. And yet he gave up so easily, the moment things got difficult or confusing.

After Jesus had died on the cross, he turned to his friends and said "I'm going fishing".

Admittedly it was a difficult and confusing time, the disciples had struggled to understand everything that Jesus has said during the time leading up to His death.

After all those years of being around Jesus, being taught, encouraged, and changed by His ministry, Peter went back to what he used to do. He went fishing. After Jesus had called Peter to follow Him, and he had left his nets behind, it was still easier to go back to what felt familiar.

It can be the same for us. We might have been given a call or a challenge from God, and at first be really excited and keen, but once we feel like we haven't been encouraged, or there is a bump in the road, or we just can't see the way forward, we turn around and go back to what we knew.

In an extreme way that can mean completely turning our backs on God, which is such a tragedy when we stop and think about everything that God has done for us, because ***Christ is risen!***

But it doesn't have to be as extreme as giving up on God altogether. What about the times in our faith when we start to 'coast' a little? I have a friend who I would always be a little nervous around, because so often he would ask me the question 'What is the last thing that God said to you?'. It's really challenging, because for me, I would find that if I wasn't sure how to answer, it was a sign that any number of things might be amiss in my life.

Am I regularly reading my bible?

Am I regularly taking time to be on my own quietly with God?

Am I making the effort to apply the teaching I receive at church into my life?

And most frighteningly of all: Do I care?

It can be so easy to jump out of our little bubble we live in, hop into church to do the 'right' things, before we go back out and carry on. But that isn't what Christ died for us for! The very reason that ***Christ is risen*** is so we *don't* have to carry on with rituals and laws that make us pure, but through the grace of God we can live in relationship with Him every day. We can allow Him to be at work in our lives, growing us, changing us, making us more like Him.

When Jesus came to earth, He didn't shut Himself up at home and only allow people to come and visit Him every Sunday - He got involved in people's lives! He ate with them, laughed with them, cried with them. He modelled to us that relationship is key.

So, if you think you've been coasting along, today is a great day to take the plunge, because ***Christ is risen!*** Today is a great day to say,

'Lord, take my life, lead me, shape me, change me, make me more like You. Help me to seek relationship with You in everything I do, and to love others like You have loved us.'

// So, this much we know is true: ***Christ is risen!***

The paradox of the Christian faith is found in the balancing act between what is known, and what is unknown. God has good reasons for why some things are revealed to us, while others remain mysterious.

God is not a liar, and God does not withhold himself from us. He gives us and shares with us what we need, when we need it.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the greatest miracle in history. It shows us that he has the victory over death, and it shows us that death is not the end. The birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus shows us who we are called to be, and points us towards where we are going.

What sets our faith apart, is the way in which Christ's death and resurrection isn't all based on distant, super-spiritual, metaphysical concepts. It's rooted in physicality, from the shredded flesh of Christ's back as he was flogged, to the cruel nails and splintered wood of the cross, to the heavy stone used to seal the tomb - that was incomprehensibly moved aside - to the "strips of linen lying by themselves".

My favourite things to ponder and meditate on during this Easter period are the temple curtain that was torn from top to bottom, and that mysterious moment when Christ was *actually* raised to life.

// Firstly, the curtain. Now, while there doesn't seem to be much in the way of additional sources to back up the gospel accounts of the curtain being torn, I find this such an astounding punctuation mark in the story of salvation. This is a fixed moment in time - the specific moment when Christ - the Son of God - died. He *actually* died. It wasn't done nominal form of death, or something different - Jesus died, and God became separated from himself.

We're actually opening a can of theological worms here, but let's just consider today at least that this is more real, more serious, and more impactful that we will ever be able to imagine or comprehend.

This year I produced a music project with a number of artists I have been in touch with. I suggested we all worked on the theme of the torn curtain, and the contributors all created some very inspiring but certainly challenging work, as the area of sound art often is. One of the tracks that were submitted was accompanied with some text, which I'd like to share with you here:

“THE ETERNAL GODHEAD, THREE-IN-ONE AND ONE-IN-THREE.
COMPLEX UNITY. COMMUNITY PERFECTED. COMPLETE HARMONY.

SEVERED.

INFINITE RUPTURE, INCONCEIVABLE PARADOX.
UTTER ISOLATION. UNBEARABLE ANGUISH.
UNALTERABLE TRIUMPH.

THIS INFINITE TORMENT, YIELDS ETERNAL PEACE.

NOISE AND ITS CLOSE RELATIVE SILENCE ARE UNIQUELY PLACED SONICALLY
AS ENACTMENTS OF THE EXTREME, AND NOTHING IN THE WHOLE OF
ETERNITY IS AS EXTREME AS THE TOTAL SEPARATION WITHIN GOD HIMSELF
IN THAT MOMENT ON THE CROSS. IF THIS HAD NOT TRULY HAPPENED THEN

IT WOULD BE BLASPHEMOUS TO EVEN CONCEIVE IT.

"MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?", CRIED OUT THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD. AS EXTREME AS THIS IS IN ALL ITS MYSTERY, HORROR AND WONDER, SO EXTREME IS HIS LOVE FOR ME THAT COMPELLED HIM TO EMBRACE SUCH SUFFERING. NOW IT IS FINISHED, THE ONCE-FOR-ALL EFFECTIVE SACRIFICE FOR MY SIN IS COMPLETE."

// So what about that moment inside the tomb? Again, this is a fixed point in time and space. *Something* happened, and the only people who were there to witness it were The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. What a moment!

We know by faith that it actually happened, and that it was miraculous.

Tom Wright puts it very well when he says that Luke doesn't "...attempt to describe, any more than the other gospels do, the moment when Jesus actually arose. This part of the story is a masterpiece of suspense. The whole chapter is another example of his great artistry, with the long middle story flanked on either side by the stories of the women and the eleven. These opening verses raise the question: something very odd has happened, but what?"

What, indeed.

Quantum physics tells us that it's possible for electrons to change their physical location from one point to another when energy is spent. It doesn't move though, it ceases to be in one place and immediately *is*, in another. I am far too poorly equipped to be able to explain that any further, but I do think it is absolutely amazing, and mysterious.

Putting aside the issue that we can't know the mechanics involved in his resurrection, we know that Christ's body went from dead, to gone, to present in a new way. It's not the same body - Jesus is not a zombie - his body is new, and it's the same resurrected body that we can expect for ourselves when we are raised to life at his return.

The resurrected body of Jesus Christ is our signpost to the hope of eternity with him. In everything he did and does, he says this: "Come and see," and, "Follow me."

Will we follow him, through life, through death, and towards the life to come? Let's be a people who proudly proclaim ***Christ is risen!***

Chris Marsh // 20th April 2014