

The real Easter story 1

When I went to visit my parents the other week because I hadn't seen them for so long one of the first things that struck me was their memory loss. My dad asked me around five times throughout the night when were Roxanne? Even though I had told him he was staying at my sister's house time and time again. I asked him about his memory and he said, "My memory is starting to go. I locked the keys in my car the other day. Fortunately, I had forgotten to get out first."

Memory loss is a horrible thing to have to go through when you have no choice. However as humans sometimes we deliberately choose to forget things. And our God knew that, that's why in the Old Testament God had to constantly remind His people who He was and what He did for them.

He would remind His people that, **He is the God of Abraham**, then a little later He would remind them that **He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**. And as time goes on you read all the way through the Old Testament that God reminds His people that **He is the God of Abraham Isaac and Jacob the God who delivered you out of Egypt**.

You God doesn't want us to forget who He is and one of the reasons we celebrate the Lord's Supper every week is to remind ourselves of the God whom we worship and what He has done for each and every one of us.

Mark 14:22 "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Mark 14:23+24 "Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins". Mark 14:25 "I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

You see Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper as a memorial feast. We eat the bread which represents His body on the cross. And we drink the wine which represents His blood which was shed so that we can obtain forgiveness for our sins.

You see it never ceases to amaze me where people come together and go to church once a year to remember celebrate Easter. Someone said to me a few weeks ago that if we are holding a special Easter service they would like to come along and attend. I quickly but gently said to them, that we celebrate Easter every week as this is what the Bible asks us to do.

I tried to explain to them that one of the reasons we partake of the Lord's Supper every week is because God doesn't want us to forget or take for granted what He did for us. I think I explained it well but they never did come along anyway. And that's because the world has its own ideas about what Easter is all about. But even though the word Easter itself isn't found in Scripture, we understand what the world means. So anyway, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper and says in **Luke 22:19 "Do this in memory of me."**

Following on in our story **Mark 14:32 "Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." Mark 14:36 "Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."**

You see Jesus had a choice, if the Lord's Supper was going to have any meaning He was going to have to do what His Father wanted Him to do. And that's the same choice which we all face today, **are we going to do what God wants us to do? Or just what we want to do?** Jesus chose the will of His Father, **will you?**

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Mark 14:44 "Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." Mark 14:45 "Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him". Luke 23:3 "Jesus was taken before Pilate. "Are you the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked. "Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied." Mark 14:60+61 "Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" But Jesus made no reply".

Now it seems to me that Jesus knew exactly what was going on and what accusations were being brought before Him but He decided to answer that question. **And I'm wondering do you guys hear what God is accusing you of every week? Does everyone know and understand what God is accusing us of every week?** Romans 3:23 "Everyone has sinned and is far away from God's saving presence".

God is accusing you of being a sinner, and you've got absolutely no chance of getting close to God for salvation on your own because you're a sinner. So the question is, **are you going to remain silent? Or are you going let Jesus do the talking for you?** You see the Lord's Supper not only reminds us about whom God is and what He has done for us. But it also reminds us of who we are and what we've done against God. **Matthew 27:22 "What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" Pilate asked the people. They all answered, "Crucify him!"**

I've got a friend in the U.S. who has his own business and in his office he has a picture with a slogan underneath which says, **'what am I going to do with Jesus today?'** And that is a question we all need to ask ourselves every day of our God given lives, **"What shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" Matthew 27:24-26 "When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood." Then he handed him over to be crucified."**

One of the blessings of life is all about choice. **Shall I have a Big Mac of a KFC? Shall I go to the cinema or rent a DVD? Shall I go to Spain on holiday or Cornwall?** Guys don't be like Pilate and wash your hands with Jesus. Don't be like Pilate and say to yourself, **'well I didn't kill Jesus' 'it wasn't my fault He went to the cross'** We can't wash our hands with Jesus because it was our fault that He came to die for us because of our sins.

What are you going to do with Jesus? Because whether you like it or not, you can't sit on the fence with this one, a decision has to be made. Pilate and the Jews had to make a decision. **Matthew 27:28+29 "They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head". Matthew 27:29 "Then they mocked him saying, "Hail, king of the Jews!" Matthew 27:31 "After they had mocked him, they led him away to crucify him".**

Pilate and the Jews made the wrong choice. I pray that nobody here makes the same choice. You can either accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour or you can walk away. For those of us who are already Christians we have the same choice every day. We can continue to accept Jesus as our Lord and Saviour or we can walk away and crucify Him all over again as **Hebrews 6:6** tells us.

So Jesus is dead, **or is He?** **Matthew 28:1 "At dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb". Matthew 28:2 "An angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled back the stone and sat on it." Matthew 28:5+6 "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said".**

The angel basically says, **'you know, Jesus told you that He was going to die and rise again what are you doing here?'** Let me ask you **what is it going to take for us to believe everything which Jesus said?** Paul reminds the church in Corinth of something which is absolutely essential to our faith. **1 Corinthians 15:3+4 "I passed on to you what I received, which is of the greatest importance: that Christ died for our sins, as written in the Scriptures; that he was buried and that he was raised to life three days later, as written in the Scriptures."**

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If we don't believe Jesus we be as well as go home now. If Jesus didn't die for our sins, we be as well go home now. If Jesus wasn't buried and came back to life three days later, we be as well go home now.

Now a vast majority in the world don't believe which is their choice. But we believe and that's why we come here every week, to remind ourselves of what we believe. And if we believe all these things then that should fill our hearts with joy to the point where we want to tell others. This is exactly what Mary Magdalene and the other Mary did.

Matthew 28:8+9 "So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him". Matthew 28:10 "Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

The women hurried to the disciples after worshipping Jesus to tell them the good news concerning Jesus. Now they believe, now they believe everything which Jesus told them. And that's the real story concerning Easter.

Jesus died, buried and rose again so that you and I can be forgiven of our sins and have a way back to God. But the story doesn't end there; just like He wanted Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to do. Just like He wanted the disciples to do, Jesus wants us to tell others about it.

Matthew 28:19+20 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you". Matthew 28:20 "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

A postman once said; "I have the greatest sense of security in delivering the mail. All the resources of the government are pledged to support me in carrying out my work. If I have only one small post card in my bag, no man dares to assault me in its delivery. All the police powers of the United Kingdom would be thrown into action, if necessary, to secure the safe delivery of that post card".

And loved ones that same promise is given by Jesus. We've got a message to share with the world and we have got all of heaven's backing and security to make sure that we can deliver it. The problem is you can't ask anyone to be a disciple of Christ if your not willing to do so yourself.

Have you ever read a story or seen a movie about someone putting a message inside of a bottle and putting it in the ocean? Perhaps it was someone who has been stranded on an island in the middle of the ocean and put a message in a bottle hoping that someone would find it and come to rescue him. Maybe it was someone who just wanted to see where the wind and the waves might take the message.

I read a true story about a man named Harold Meyers who went on a cruise in the Caribbean. While on the ship, he took three bottles and placed a message with his name and address and a dollar inside each bottle.

The dollar was to pay the postage so that the person who found the message would write to him and tell him where they found it. Next, he put a cork in the bottles, sealed them with wax, and threw them over the side of the ship into the ocean. His friends all teased him saying that he was just throwing good money into the ocean. Well, what happened to those bottles is quite amazing. Of those three bottles he threw into the ocean, two were found and he received a reply from the person who found it. Two out of three! That's amazing! "To tell you the truth," Mr. Meyers said, "I was shocked. I guess I really never expected to hear from anybody at all."

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I was thinking, perhaps that might be a good way to spread the message of Jesus all around the world. We could write **John 3:16** on pieces of paper. **You know John 3:16, don't you? "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."**

We could write that on a piece of paper, put it in a bottle, and drop it in the ocean. Then the good news of Jesus would float all around the world. **Does that sound like a good plan to you?** Well, to tell the truth, I think that sounds like a pretty foolish plan. I don't think that would get the message of God's love to very many people. **What would be a good way to get the good news of God's love to people all around the world?**

Jesus told his disciples how he wanted it done, and the plan is still just as good today as it was then. Jesus said, **"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."**

Jesus wants us to tell everyone we meet about his love for them and share with them what he has taught us in the Bible. He didn't say, **"Send a message in a bottle,"** he said, **"Go and make disciples."**

Pictures of a stamped addressed envelope. **Have you ever given a party? Have you ever been invited to a party?** The first step in planning and having a party is to decide what kind of party you will have. Next you decide who is going to be invited and you send invitations to all of the people that you want to come to your party.

I have an invitation this morning. As you can see, the envelope has a name on it, an address, and there is a stamp on the envelope. Once I take this invitation to the Post Office and put in the mailbox, it is their job to deliver the invitation.

When you mail an invitation, does the Post Office decide which ones they will deliver and which ones they won't? No, of course not. It is their responsibility to deliver all of the invitations that are mailed. The Post Office can't say, **"We are pretty busy today, if we don't deliver these invitations, maybe someone else will tell the people about the party."** **What if it is raining? Can the Post Office say, "It is raining today and if we go out to deliver these invitations, we might get wet so we will wait until it stops raining?"** No, the invitation has been sent and it must be delivered, come rain or shine. If they wait until the weather is just right, the invitation might be too late.

Did you know that Jesus has sent an invitation? His invitation says, **"Come!"** **Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."** Jesus has also decided who is to be invited. Everyone is invited! The invitation is addressed to **"whoever wishes to come."** Now it is time to deliver the invitation.

Do you know who Jesus has chosen to deliver the invitation? You and me! In the verses of the Bible that we call **"The Great Commission,"** he told us to go everywhere and tell everyone about his love for them!

Jesus has sent the invitation and he has given the job of delivering it to you and to me. Busy or not, rain or shine, we must deliver the message before it's too late. The question is **will you respond to the invite?**