

Dear all

Something that has appeared on my Facebook feed today has pointed out that today is the final countdown 4.3.21. Actually, for a clever bit of number punning, it only works if you use American dates, where the month comes first. We had our final countdown on 4th March in the UK. I'm not sure what it was counting down to, as nothing much happened!

2 things struck me about this point, however. Firstly, depending how you look at it, either how pervasive American culture has become, or what a trans-global culture we have become. Good or bad? There must be something positive about sharing our cultures, our cultural perspectives, our beliefs, our artistry... We can only become enriched this way – unless, that is, we find a mono-culture that sweeps everything else before it, including what makes us unique, quirky even.

We can see the same thing with our Christian faith. Not only do we face a threat from the all-pervasive secular culture, which often denies the spiritual dimension; but even in church circles, we often fail to see how one dominant culture can carry all before it. One thing we have been reminded of time and time again in our Lent Group has been the importance of an ecumenical viewpoint – to share with our brothers and sisters in other denominations and churches for the good of the Kingdom of God in this place. Perhaps Easter, with its focus on the Resurrection, is something we can all agree on!

For those who have children/grandchildren, this is something interesting to share with them – you might enjoy it yourself! The Easter Story in fingerpaint.

[The Easter Story \(in finger paints\) - YouTube](#)

For a more 'grown-up' take on the story, the Easter Story in Sand Art! I was stunned when I discovered this!.

[A SAND ART EASTER STORY- 'He Lives' - YouTube](#)

2 letters ago, I shared a poem by a former colleague of mine. Chris Rickards taught English and Drama at the school I first taught at. She sang at mine and Helen's wedding. The poem was called 'Primrose'. After I wrote and thanked her for allowing me to share it, she wrote a poem for me, specifically to share this Easter.

THE CARPENTER'S CHILD

A My father was a carpenter
I used to sit
On the floor
While he planed the
Sweet-smelling wood.

Ringlets would drop
From his strong hands
Into my hands.
I liked the feel of smoothness,
The shine of the grain
Counting the age-lines.

Your father was a carpenter.
Did you sit
On the floor
While he planed the
Sweet-smelling wood?

Did you curl the ringlets
From his strong hands
Round your fingers?
Feeling the smoothness,
Counting the lines of the tree's life?
The lines of your life.
All too short?

Did a carpenter cut your tree?
The tree on which you hung
Nailed...
Did he plane the wood?
Did your skin feel the smooth lines?
Did the memory of curled ringlets
From strong, Father's hands
Comfort you in your pain?

Carpenter's Child.

For Easter 2021

Chris added that 'My Dad was a carpenter and indeed, I used to sit on the floor of the shed as he planed wood. I loved the smell and watching as thin slivers of wood fell down to me, sitting on the floor.'

Our final session of the **Lent Course** discussed stories of finding Jesus.

Referring to Paul before King Agrippa in Acts 26, Hannah Steele comments that it is transparent that Paul desires that everyone would meet Jesus, but "quickly or not". For some, many in fact, it is a slowly evolving movement towards faith. She compares Paul's experience on the road to Damascus and that of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, meaning a gradual process involving many influences, people, places, and conversations. Evangelism often requires patience, commitment, and perseverance. There is a problem when we try to make the sudden conversion experience the 'normal'.

Faith is a journey. It can be hard to realise just how big a shift it is for people to believe in the Christian gospel. Concepts that make sense to us are completely nonsensical to others. Our role as a witness is often more akin to nudging people along the pathway than running a sprint. This requires patience, perseverance and creative skill. We need to ask ourselves "what is the next step this person needs to make on their faith journey?" and support that the best we can.

One way is establishing trust - helping people to have a positive view of what a Christian is – compared to what they may have seen or experienced, or imagined.

An important awareness is that people today are less concerned about whether Christianity is objectively true, and more concerned with whether it works in practice. It is important simply to speak of the continuing reality of Jesus in our day-to-day lives with small answers to prayer and the strength to help through difficult times.

And our goal is not just to move onto the next person after we have evangelised one. Jesus commissioned his disciples to make disciples, not converts! The good news is not just about believing, but receiving life in Jesus' name, and following him.

Please note there will be **no** study group for the next 2 weeks. We resume on Thursday 22nd April, continuing where we left off in Mark's Gospel, chapter 5.

Service details for this coming Sunday, Easter Sunday.

Readings – Isaiah 25: 6-9; Acts 10: 34-43; Psalm 118: 1-2, 14-24; Mark 16: 1-8.

Hymns – Jesus Christ is risen today, Now the green blade rises, Thine be the glory.

Today's musical offerings (apologies for adverts – it's how they are able to make content free!):

The Psalm is the same set, with a slightly different choice of verses, as last Sunday, so I leave them here.

Firstly, Anglican chant.

[\(1\) Psalm 118: O Give Thanks Unto The Lord, For He Is Gracious - YouTube](#)

And, for total contrast...

In Hebrew

[\(1\) Psalm 118 sung in Hebrew - תהלים קיח -אודף \[NEW HALLEL TUNE\] - YouTube](#)

There are so many possible anthems, I will leave just 2 choices:

Stanford – Ye choirs of New Jerusalem.

[Ye Choirs of New Jerusalem - YouTube](#)

And what I play every Easter Day, Bach's Easter Oratorio. Just listen to the glorious opening!

[Bach - Easter Oratorio: Kommt, eilet und laufet BWV 249 - Van Veldhoven | Netherlands Bach Society - YouTube](#)

Happy Easter.

Stay safe.

Blessings and love



Mark