

31st March 2024 - Easter Day, Evensong

Father Evan

I love a good Easter egg. In fact, I've eaten several already today: the mini ones with the hard shell. There's a big one waiting to be consumed this week, and a number of gold-foil wrapped ones in a bowl in the living room which will be hard to resist snacking on.

When I was a child, it was always great fun to dye eggs in various pastel shades. I can't remember that we did anything with the eggs after dyeing them, but I can still smell the food colouring and feel the crinkly texture of the plastic 'grass' with which we lined the decorative basket.

Eggs have been a symbol of Easter, and of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for a very, very long time. In the 19th century, folklorists speculated that Easter eggs had a pagan origin as part of a springtime festival dedicated to a goddess named Ostara, but we now know there's no evidence for that. Just when and how eggs came to be connected with Easter isn't really clear and I'll be honest with you: I'm not sure it really matters.

We like to know how and why things began. I suspect this curiosity is often a way of demonstrating our control over the world. We feel in charge when we can explain, when we can answer 'why'. But, more often than most of us would like to admit, the 'whys' of the world, our lives, and our beliefs are not easily answerable. And sometimes the process of trying to answer 'why' reveals just how little control we actually have.

Yet acknowledging our powerlessness, our lack of knowledge, and our lack of control is precisely what Easter is about. The Bible teaches us that we are by nature captive to sin. Sin is a state of being, a way of living, not simply a few discrete and separate actions, and we can't help but live according to it; our whole lives are coloured by it, not unlike how the shell of an egg is dyed or painted. We cannot escape the fact that we are marked by sin. That is why we need Jesus Christ. We are trapped and we need help to escape.

The resurrection of Jesus from the tomb has been likened to an egg hatching. From something that looks impenetrable new life has burst forth. The discovery of the empty tomb on the first Easter day shows that the shell of sin need not be a prison. We can break out. But we can't do it alone; we need supernatural help. We need the help of the only one ever to break out of the prison-tomb of death.

This morning at the Parish Eucharist we were reminded of our baptism. We were reminded of promises made (for most of us) on our behalf when our parents brought

us to be christened- to be made Christians. Turning away from sin and turning to Jesus Christ was one of those promises. In baptism, by God's grace, we are given the strength to ask the one who broke the shell of sin and death to do the same for us. If you have been baptised, that grace has been offered to you.

Easter Day is an opportunity to claim that promise. If you've never thought to claim it for yourself, but know you need to be free of whatever is holding you back, keeping you trapped in a hard shell, take this as your opportunity to ask Jesus to set you free by his power. If you've claimed Jesus' resurrection power for yourself, take Easter Day as an opportunity to give thanks. Thank the Lord Jesus Christ that he has set you free to serve him without fear, and ask him to continue to keep you free from the sin that so easily starts to build up in our lives.

Who ever heard of a man rising from the dead? This knowledge is too wonderful for us; we cannot comprehend it. And it's the truth, most wonderful, mysterious truth. One who died now lives. One who was placed in a tomb stone-cold dead came out of it three days later warm and vigorous and completely alive. And what life he has in himself, the Lord Jesus, that he can give it to you and not be at all diminished in himself.

If you want to be free, if you want to be truly alive, if you want to burst from the shell that keeps you trapped in darkness, he will do it: Jesus will set you free, Jesus will fill you with his supernatural life, Jesus will bring you out of darkness into a new world of light. All you need do is ask.

Amen.