

April 2010

Dear neighbours,

We will be holding our Easter services, God willing, on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. We cordially invite you to join us.

On **Good Friday** (2nd April) our service will be held at 10.45am, lasting about an hour and a quarter. At this service time will be taken to explain from the Bible the significance of Jesus' dying.

On **Easter Sunday** our services will be at 10.45am and 2pm. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and, in consequence, the resurrection of all believers in Him will be the subject of these two services. We will sing familiar Easter hymns. Again the services last between an hour and a quarter and an hour and 20 minutes.

Many of you will remember with affection believing parents who themselves attended church and brought you up to go to Sunday School and learn the basics of the Christian faith. The rather different pressures of life of one sort and another and the rather different culture of these days may have conspired to have caused you to lapse in church commitment.

And yet the earlier generation was not wrong. If believing in Christ, worshipping and serving Him was right then, it is right now. If His words, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14.6) were right when He uttered them, they have not ceased to be the truth with the passing of the years and deserve our respect and consideration now as then.

The great occasions of the Christian faith, like Christmas, Easter and Whitsun, provide a ready-made opportunity to return to our roots. It is less strange, less embarrassing even, to enter a church, for the first time in years maybe, at these times. Bible truth has undergirded this nation for hundreds of years and has undoubtedly shaped the history of its best times. But a nation is made up of individuals; and it is the sum total of individuals who hold the faith which alone can constitute a nation as predominantly Christian.

It probably cannot now be called predominantly Christian. But that is no reason why individuals should forgo their heritage and their right to hear and believe the gospel, to have their sins forgiven, to enter upon everlasting life and live with Christ in their hearts by faith. The older we get – the nearer to eternity. It is no time to be careless about eternal things. This season provides us with an opportunity of a new beginning.

Not all of you will have attended church with your parents or have been to Sunday School. Your only connection with the church and its teaching may have been at school assemblies, weddings and funerals. You may not have found these inspiring.

You should not dismiss the Christian faith because of such brief encounters. You owe it to yourself to examine what Christian belief and discipleship is all about. In two or three brief services we cannot do all that, but we can provide a taster.

We would like to see you but, if we don't, may I suggest you read the Gospel of Mark and, if you find that compelling, then the other three gospels too. Their great subject is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He alone who is worthy of the adoration of our souls. If our interest is kindled, it is that we may become disciples of Him.

Of course, life has many unanswered questions. Some of them may never be answered in this world as they are designed to test our faith. But faith ultimately has as its object the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the answer; or, to put it another way as the Bible says, "He is the end (fulfilment) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10.4).

We hope you will join us. Not for our sakes, but because there is a big task ahead. If a nation is to be moulded by truth, then it means that a great number of individuals must embrace and be committed to a faith worth living for. If the nation is to be changed, then it must begin in local communities – villages, towns, boroughs, counties. It must begin somewhere, perhaps even in many individual hearts and lives at once. But why should we remain ignorant of such a Saviour as Jesus Christ and endanger the destiny of our own souls by neglecting so great a faith?

The Bible teaches that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3.16). May I invite you to notice a number of things:-

1. God loves the world.
2. He loved it with such quality love that He gave His Son to die for it.
3. Faith is required of us as individuals – note the word "whosoever".
4. By nature we are perishing. If we carry on as we are, we will perish.
5. Everlasting life is the summit for which this life is simply a preparation.
6. Every believer in Christ shall have this life.

Consider that word "perishing". It is well chosen. We say we are perishing with cold or hunger. We mean that we are unable to think straight or grip things because we are so cold, or are too hungry to accomplish our tasks. We speak of a balloon perishing. It doesn't cease to exist, but it ceases to be a balloon. It ceases to be what it was made for. If we perish, we shall not go out of existence; but we shall cease to be what we were made to be. Perishing is being banished everlastingly from the presence of God, not ceasing to exist. Everlasting life is being welcomed into God's presence for ever "where there is no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Revelation 21.4) and where "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2.9).

May the love of God be shed abroad in your heart and may it all come true this Eastertime.