

SUNDAY 3RD APRIL EASTER SUNDAY

Thought for the Week:

"Easter – can it be a time of Jubilee?"

Well, we've finally arrived at the second Easter we are celebrating during this time of Lockdown. For many it has been an incredibly hard year, both personally and as a community.

And this year Easter has a very different feel to me than it did last year.



Last year, somewhat naively perhaps, I certainly thought that the Pandemic and Lockdown were only going to last a few months. Although things were tough, they were also new and so there was a new sense of energy to try and think how we could celebrate not just the highlight of the Christian year but also the greatest moment in history next to the creation of the world. Things were hard, but positivity was also high.

This year Lent, and even Holy Week, have felt quite different. There has been a lot less creative energy, or perhaps, what there has been has been tempered by both a much higher level of fatigue and tiredness and also, what do they call it, by a lot of “water that has passed under the bridge,” people’s experiences of feeling hurt, upset, misunderstood, let down, undervalued – so many stories of pain, loss, and sense of uprootedness by unwanted and unwelcome change being forced upon many people in so many different ways.

I am very grateful therefore to so many of the wonderful team of ministers/bloggers, musicians, technical team, Church@Home team, staff team and Wardens, and not least the small army of cleaners and flower ladies who have done so much to help make the journey through this year and to this Easter possible.

The big question is what happens next?

In the Jewish tradition, from which our Christian faith comes, there has long been the historic understanding of “a year of Jubilee.” It comes from the Book of Leviticus (Lev 25:8-13) and forms part of what is known as The Torah (the Books of Moses) given by God to the Israelite people as they began their new life in the Promised Land after the Exodus.



The “year of Jubilee” is particularly associated with “land” and with “release from debts.” After ever fifty years (seven - being a perfect number in Judaism, times seven, and then the next year) the trumpet (the Jewish Shofar) should be sounded from the corner of the Temple in Jerusalem on the Day of Atonement and a “year of Jubilee” should begin with land being returned to their original owners and tribes, debts being cancelled by those to whom the debts are owed, and those in slavery and bondage being set free.

The whole idea behind this corporate and communal pressing of the national “reset” button was something that worked at so many levels. Economically, because it re-levelled the ‘haves’ and the ‘have nots’ rather than continuing to let the disparity of wealth creation grow ever greater – with the rich continuing to get richer often at the expense of the poor.

Politically, it reminded those who led the decision-making process that they too were under a sense of accountability both in terms of a time frame but also to a ‘blueprint’ bigger than their own and which belonged to God. And finally, theologically, the “year of Jubilee” reminded everyone, from the most impoverished to the most powerful, that ultimately every person and every piece of land was ultimately God’s: we ‘own’ nothing, we are only ever but ‘Stewards,’ and fellow ‘travellers’ passing through, hopefully in the process bringing a little bit of blessing to the world and to others as we go.

Needless to say, since approx. 600BC, the “year of Jubilee” has been ‘suspended’ in the land of Israel, based on a belief that until all the tribes are ‘re-united in Israel,’ such a practice would not be appropriate. A far more likely reason would be that those who have gained much during the intervening years, in wealth, land, and in other ways, would have much therefore to lose by such a practice. Imagine the Banks and money lenders wiping off debts, the landowners and landlords giving back the land, and the politicians feeling they were indeed to have their ‘powers’ limited and were to be held accountable?

But what about this year? Does this year not need to be “a year of Jubilee?” We may think it far-fetched to talk about land being returned – but do we not need a new emphasis as human beings that we are called to be “stewards” and co-participants and indeed “servants” of Creation, not “owners” and therefore “exploiters?”

And In the area of wealth creation, we may find it laughable that the banks and mortgage companies would ever just write-off someone’s debts, but the need to ‘level up’ (to quote our Prime Minister) not just between north and south, but between different ethnic and racial groups, between men and women, between boys and girls currently, has hardly ever been stronger, for the danger is that we have all come to see the ‘other’ simply as an ‘object’ for either our exploitation or to be ‘accommodated’ at best or ‘overcome’ at worst. True value, and indeed true worth, only comes when there is a ‘bottom line’ that “everyone has the ‘right’ to be an equal and valued ‘child’ of God. And that it is also everyone’s ‘responsibility’ to honour and seek to enable that,” both for the victim and the perpetrator alike.

Which leads us into the last and perhaps the most difficult and painful area of all to enable with, our accountability to God, because people can never forget. But only if people are willing to work hard in the area of forgiveness, can we possibly ever truly appreciate the possibility of a ‘new world’ after this pandemic; a world which is kinder, more thoughtful, more caring, that takes time to pause and to value the small and the simple, as well as the shiny and the glossy. When people are carrying so much hurt and pain, more often than not for very real reasons, but also with an unwillingness to even try to begin to forgive, the reality is people will always be wanting someone else to “blame,” someone to be “held to account,” some experience of hurt to “justify” why we are not going to let the other person ‘off the hook’ and see them as anything but “the offender.” And so, we have all long lost sight both of their ‘childhood’ in God, but also, any need for ourselves to ever remind ourselves that we were called to be “children” too – preferring and justifying instead that ‘we want to be God.’

Jesus had some very strong words with regard to this. He said, “For in the same way as you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Matt 7:2) We can never forget. All hurt is just below the surface. It returns in a flash as soon as someone or something scratches the scar from the last time. But unless we take an active decision to work at trying to forgive, ‘to let it go,’ we not only hold the ‘other’ in bondage we feel they deserve, we are ourselves held in bondage and have limited our own horizon and cutting ourselves off to any future. The



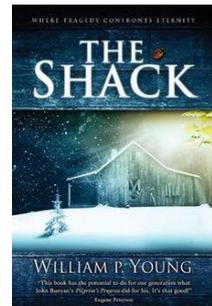
concept of the “year of Jubilee,” and more importantly the Cross and Easter, calls us to press the “reset” button to our own past catalogue of hurts and pains, grievances, and imperfections – those we have caused others and those that have been committed so painfully to us, justified and the most difficult of all, the unjustified.

This year has been a very tough year. When times are tough, we can either simply resign ourselves to the fact that this is “how it always has been, and therefore always shall be,” or we can choose, in response to the incredible promises of the Cross and of the first Easter morning (John 20:1-18), and in response to the subsequent wonderful stories of resurrection, to follow Jesus’ example and note with keen interest how He wonderfully and powerfully calls so many of those first disciples, and indeed us, once again by name, “Mary,” “Thomas,” “Peter,” “John” effectively setting an example, but also a reality, of a “Jubilee of jubilees,” and making all things new.

‘Making all things new’ isn’t necessarily simply doing ‘new’ things but maybe seeing all that is in ‘new’ ways. May the challenge and the potential of Easter enable within each of us “a year of Jubilee.” After all, maybe it just might be what the whole Church, and indeed the whole world, needs most of all.

Have a wonderful and blessed Easter.
Matt Thomson

P.S. If ever you would like to explore further this ‘journey’ of the potential of “the year of Jubilee,” and/or the ‘power’ of Easter, I have to say I have found a good imaginative narrative story into exploring the whole subject to be found in the book “The Shack” by W M Paul Young, which was then made into a film of the same name in 2017 – both available from Eden or Amazon. Although, not everyone’s ‘cup of tea,’ the book and the film try to show, through a fictitious story, many aspects of what the “year of Jubilee” and of true discovery of ‘childhood’ might look like in the eyes of God, at least in some way.



What is happening “Worship wise” to Church after Easter?

We are currently in a situation where Church worship is currently “Online only” but with the next milestones in the Government “road map” to easing restrictions coming up on the 12th April and then the 17th May (subject to further guidance) the Wardens and others will be looking at whether we can once again resume ‘physical’ worship alongside online worship and so move to once again being a “Hybrid” Church.



As soon as any further details are available we will, of course, let people know through all the various communication channels, Church@Home, Pews News, Social media, the website etc. In the meantime, both churches are open each day for private prayer.

Matt Thomson

If you would like to join us in worship online, please visit:
Our Website: www.newcreationchurches.org.uk
Or our Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/>

Thank You

A huge **thank you** to everyone who has donated Easter Eggs for the FoodBank and for homeless shelters. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.



Discipleship and Journeying with God:

The BIG NEWS is that the next season (Season Two) of “The Chosen” is being released on Easter Day.

The worldwide ‘crowdfunded’ project has now reached over 98 million people.

If you would like to watch “The Chosen” in your own time it can be obtained for free, either via YouTube (simply type in “The Chosen”) or via an App, which can be downloaded to your Smartphone or Tablet.

And, if you would like to join a “Home Group” that will be looking at the end of Series One and then Series Two, there is a group that meets online on a Monday evening.

PLEASE contact Kirsty Bowles (Lay Pioneer Minister) email:

kirsty.bowles@newcreationchurches.org.uk or **07871 513151 to get the code for the Zoom meeting to join in (needed for Safeguarding purposes).**

Matt Thomson

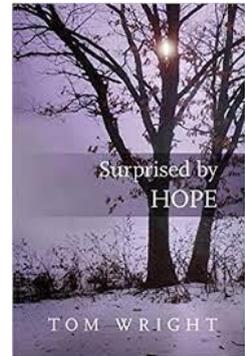


Daily Blog – What’s happening NEXT?

We begin a ‘new chapter’ in the life of the Daily Blog each day – we will now begin looking at what is likely to become a ‘classic’ in the Christian world of writing, a book called “Surprised by Hope” by Tom Wright.

Written some years ago – there will be an online “Thought for the Day” each day as usual, see: <https://www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches/> or via the New Creation website: <http://www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/>

But if you do not like doing technology, the Book is an important very thoughtful read and can be obtained via Eden or Amazon or any good bookstore.



“Surprised by Hope” look specifically at how resurrection is understood in Scripture, what it is, and what it is not, and also at what is God therefore wanting to say as we look to be a Church that looks to the future and to the depth and breadth of His promises.

Really important as we begin to think about how we seek to be Church in the days and the years to come.

Matt Thomson.

Do you have a favourite hymn or worship song?

We are looking to have the first in house ‘recording session’ on **Saturday 10th April** – thank you to Mike Thomson for all his help to organise this.

Are there any songs or hymns that you would like to be recorded? We have had some suggestions sent through but would love to hear your favourites.

Please send them in to George by emailing georginawalker1994@gmail.com.

