

How would you sum up Easter in 3 words?

Chocolate, Chocolate and Chocolate?

Holiday, family traffic jams?

What happened on that first Easter day is the most life-transforming event in the whole of human history, an event that has impacted cultures, business models and the lives of countless millions throughout two thousand years. And here we are today, still celebrating that event.

3 words..

Here are mine...

- 1) Royalty. It's a big royal year, this year, as the queen celebrates 70 years – she's seen changes to empire, society and family; more important still when we look at the bible, we see Jesus as king for all times throughout history. Humanly speaking, Jesus was born of royal descent through his ancestor King David, and the name we know Jesus by today, Christ, is not his surname, but a title – he is God's anointed one. When Jesus lived on earth, healing and teaching, people said 'who is this' and the leaders as he was being tried asked him directly – and it's something he didn't really answer, instead he pointed people to the Old Testament, to God's promise of a coming king who would rule like a good shepherd. Jesus is God in the flesh – God's son who came to rule with justice, truth, and love. We've just commemorated Good Friday – and there more than anywhere we see Jesus dying a royal death. Remember Pilate's inscription on the cross – Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. No doubt, Pilate did this to wind up the Jewish leaders of the day; yet in giving Jesus this title, Pilate fulfilled what the old testament had promised, including God's king being pierced by nails hanging on a tree. But why did Jesus have to die?

Here's the second word –

- 2) Sacrifice. Jesus death – what a tragedy? We could rightly say Jesus died as a result of human wickedness, the same wickedness we see at work in Ukraine today. But in Jesus death there is much more. Here is the perfect one, and here is our imperfect world, of which we are a part. Each of us has a dark side, a side we like to keep hidden, hidden from ourselves, certainly hidden from others, but it cannot be hidden from God – indeed it's best it isn't because we find in the cross that darkness defeated. Do you remember in John's gospel Jesus words on the cross as he dies – it is finished. This is no cry of defeat – it means 'my job is done'. He dies to pay the price of our dark side, so we can know God's light and perfection in our lives. In the cross of Jesus we can be made clean again. Often at Easter we renew our Baptism promises, today in our service we echo the words of the creed and say 'I believe and trust' – in Jesus Christ who died for me. Why did Jesus die? My third word?

3) Victory. Thank God that Easter does not end with Jesus dying on a cross. The events of Good Friday, Jesus being placed in the tomb, and the women and others waiting on Easter Eve give way to Easter day! John 20:1 Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalen went to the tomb and found that the stone had been moved away from the entrance. The tomb was empty, the body gone, and angels announced that Jesus was risen! Just as the word of God had promised. All the Gospels record how the risen Lord Jesus appears to a whole series of people, men and women, over a period of time and astonished disciples have their despair changed to hope. He meet some, like Mary, alone. He meets others together. He meets doubters and grievors and transforms each and every one with his risen presence. But what's important, I feel, is not the strong evidence for the resurrection itself, but what it means...

- a. Jesus resurrection proves his royalty. The resurrection is God's vindication of everything Jesus did and said and claimed to be. God raised Jesus to life as the ruler of the whole world.
- b. Jesus resurrection proves that his sacrifice was accepted. The resurrection is God's resounding 'yes' to Jesus sin-bearing death. He paid the price, and the price was accepted. Cleansing and forgiveness is now possible.
- c. Jesus resurrection proves his victory over human death. There is life beyond this life

When we accept this truth, God promises so much more. In Jesus God promises to lead us, teach us, cleanse us and guide us, what's more he promises to transform us from within and make us the people we are called to be.

That's why we're here, that's why we celebrate on Easter Day. And the chocolate is just an added bonus!