

'Let Go for Lent' – March 2019

'Easter is coming' just doesn't have the same kind of appeal or elicit the same response to the reminder that 'Christmas is coming', and we don't have to think about it for too long to see why that's so. Whatever people may believe about the Biblical account of a baby born in humble circumstances some two thousand years ago in a little backwater town in the Middle East, the birth of a baby has universal appeal. So much so that the Christmas season of the church has been embraced by people (of faith and no faith at all) right around the world.

A season that speaks of 'peace and goodwill to all' is immediately attractive, and the practices of a festive meal with family and friends, and the giving and receiving of gifts has great appeal.

So, 'Christmas is coming' readily stirs most people's hearts and minds with positive thoughts and feelings that fill them with a sense of anticipation. (Unless, of course, your name is 'Scrooge'!)

By contrast, the Biblical account of the events of Easter that begins with the betrayal and execution of an innocent man, and concludes with the stupendous claim of his bodily resurrection has no such appeal and is, in fact, rather sombre and quite confronting.

The message of the Cross, as the apostle Paul says, is both an 'offense' and a 'stumbling block' for many.

Yet, for followers of Jesus, the events of the weekend that we will recall and celebrate next month as 'Easter' (April 19-21): - these are ***the most pivotal events of our faith!***

Being so pivotal, Easter calls for a lead-in to prevent us stumbling upon it unawares – all too easy in a busy world!

This '**Let Go for Lent**' page is offered today (and for the next month) as a resource towards helping us all **reclaim Easter**.

It is an invitation for you – be it on your own with the Lord, or in the company of your spouse, or a prayer partner, or perhaps in a Life Group (?) – to take some time over the weeks ahead to 'prepare' for Easter.

The focus of these pages is to help us engage with the familiar Easter story in ways that will take us deeper in our understanding of all that Father has done for us in and through the passion, death and resurrection of His son, the Lord Jesus.

May we find ourselves saying, 'Easter is coming', and be filled with a sense of great anticipation. And may we have stories to tell of fresh encounters/experiences of our Risen Lord Jesus this Easter!

Read – Reflect - Respond

Over the coming weeks we will read, in turn, the chapters from each of the Gospels that cover the events of Easter. The aim here is to 'marinate' ourselves in the story of the Cross. Yes, some parts of the narrative will appear exactly the same as parts of another gospel. But even where that is so, be ready and expect the Holy Spirit to highlight something you hadn't seen before. And you will notice some differences, which we should expect from eyewitness accounts. The degree of 'sameness' between Matthew, Mark, and Luke (the 'Synoptic' gospels) is because we know they shared at least one common source.

Since this page comes with our weekly e-letter on a Thursday, we will think of each week as going from Friday to Thursday.

So, for this week, **Week 1** (Fri March 15 – Thurs March 21), you're invited to read **Matthew, chapters 26-28**.

Before you read:

Ask Holy Spirit to illuminate the scriptures for you, so you'll have 'eyes to see and ears to hear'. Then,

Be alert to words, phrases, verses that stand out to you, and stop a while and meditate there.

Consider if there is anything you need to ask the Lord, and do so. As he speaks,

Determine to act – write down what you've seen/heard – and act on anything you sense you must do.

Prayer:

'Thank you, Father, that Easter is coming! Death has no sting, no victory, because of Jesus! Glory and honour and praise to His name! Thank you for rescuing me.

Lord Jesus, let this be a time where I am brought once again, to the foot of your cross.

Holy Spirit, renew my mind and take me deeper in my appreciation and experience of Father's love for me - and for everyone!

Help me Jesus, to hold both the weight and the joy of this season in my heart, and help me to lay hold afresh, the fullness of life you made ours, through your risen life! Amen'.

Next Week: 'Let Go, to Take Hold'

