

The Most Important Things This Easter

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4 NIV)

I read in the paper this week that Easter is becoming the new Christmas, which I'm not sure is a good thing! The article was referring to the increased size of the celebrations that people now have for Easter, to the extent that you can now buy Easter crackers for your Easter Sunday lunch! Easter certainly now has a lot going on, not least for those of us who are church ministers and churchgoers. There are a lot of services over the Easter weekend. It's the school holidays which means the children are home or the grandchildren are over. There are Easter eggs to buy (and of course consume!). It's easy to lose track of what is most important at Easter.

On Easter Sunday we'll be looking at a passage above that emphasizes what the apostle Paul thought were the most important things in his message – and its the Easter story. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

There is much that could be said just from these two verses and I hope we will say much of that over the Easter period. I want us to focus on just one thing here though. These are the things "of first importance." In the midst of Easter, this is the heart of the what Christians believe, the heart of our message in church and the heart of our message to the world.

This is a message that takes sin and salvation seriously – Christ died for our sins. It takes resurrection and the hope of new life seriously – he was buried and raised from the dead. It takes the Scriptures, i.e. God keeping his word, seriously – it was all according to the Scriptures.

This Easter, can you ponder on the most important things. The great Baptist preacher Spurgeon wrote:

"The cross, which is the object of faith, is also, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the cause of it. Sit down and watch the dying Saviour till faith springs up spontaneously in your heart. There is no place like Calvary for creating confidence. The air of that sacred hill brings health to trembling faith. Many a watcher there has said:

"While I view Thee—wounded, grieving,
Breathless on the cursed tree—
Lord, I feel my heart believing
That Thou suffer'dst thus for me."

(from *Pearls from Many Seas: A Galaxy of Thought from Four Hundred Writers of Wide Repute*).

The way not to let ourselves be distracted by the "new Christmas" is to ensure we keep our focus on the most important things. This Easter focus on the cross and the empty tomb.