

Mount Magnet Easter Service

Call to Worship (He is Risen!) Mark 16:1-6

Song 1: Up from the Grave (Low, In the Grave He Lay)

Announcements?

Reading 1: John 20:1-10

Song 2: Jesus Paid It All

Prayers

Song 3 & Offering: Speak, O Lord

Reading 2: Revelation 22:1-5

Sermon: “Good News vs. Bad News”

Song 4: Across The Lands

Benediction: Ephesians 3:20-21

Good News – Bad News

Introduction

Has anybody NOT heard “I’ve got some good news and some bad news: which do you want to hear first?”

The Bible also has Good News and Bad News, and when we celebrate Easter, we acknowledge that fact.

1. World history

There are no prizes for guessing that the world around us is in a bad way. There is plenty of bad news every day, but how did it get like that?

It’s not as if the rocks, the forests or the animals are bad in themselves, although something seems wrong about the way animals attack other animals and humanity. There are lots of dangers to avoid.

Most of the problem seems to be with humanity, though – people are bad, mixed with some good. What happened?

The Bible tells us that God made a beautiful, good world in the beginning, so it all started with Good News. But then Adam and Eve as the first people made a mess by deliberately refusing to have God in charge of them. They wanted to run things their own way, refused God’s Way and wrecked their relationship with Him. As a result, they needed to say sorry and be forgiven by God for refusing Him and offending Him. But they didn’t want to know that.

That’s Bad News, because it was impossible to run their lives by themselves, and in the end they died, just as God warned them. Also their choice resulted in the good creation being out of joint and spoiled as well.

However, God had already planned to fix the whole mess, which is Good News to overcome the Bad News.

2. Christmas

The history of people after Adam and Eve is all downhill, with trouble everywhere. But at just the right time, God put His plan into action, by sending Jesus to be born in Bethlehem. We look at Christmas as Good News and celebrate it happily, don't we? We recognise that this was God coming to us, becoming one of us, to show us how we should live. But there was more to it than Jesus being a "good example." Yes, He healed a lot of people and brought forgiveness. He was better than Adam and Eve because He obeyed God the Father fully. He lived a perfect and completely innocent life.

3. Reactions

So what happened? Well, different groups reacted in different ways. Large crowds of the "ordinary" people, living under the control of outside powers (the Roman Empire) and knowing their sorry condition spiritually as well as in everyday life, could see that trying to be boss of their own lives wasn't working. They clicked with the national search for their Messiah, a national hero like the great kings of their glorious past – David and Solomon. They saw the miracles that Jesus did, and recognised that this Man was giving them hope – even though most didn't recognise exactly Who He was.

His close circle of disciples, who lived and worked with Him for three years, understood more but still didn't grasp everything about Him. When He went to trial, they abandoned Him – almost as a lost cause. Even after His resurrection, they were slow to catch on.

The third group were the officials and the religious leaders of the nation. They were in power and thought they were running the place under the general control of the Romans. They saw Jesus as a rabble-rouser, a troublemaker who would bring the power of Rome down on their cosy situation and wipe out the entire nation. So the

Bible tells us that they arrested Him, rigged his trials, had Him condemned unjustly, and executed as a criminal, totally wrongly. That was the Bad News of Friday.

But that wasn't the whole story, nor was it the end of the story. God's plan was that Jesus (God the Son) came to take our place – it was our sin against God that brought our guilt, and should have resulted in our death. However, Jesus was the One who died, in our place so, just like Barrabas, we escaped the punishment. For us, Friday is *Good Friday*.

And there is still more. Sunday comes and the followers of Jesus are hiding, because their leader is gone and they don't know what to do. But news comes that the tomb is empty! They can't believe it, until Peter and John race to the site, see the evidence and then finally realise what He was telling them all along.

This is great news -- Good beats Bad, and death is not the end of everything.

4. Our response

Now, all of that happened over 2000 years ago in a land half a world away from us here, so what are we to make of it?

The one thing we can't do is ignore it. Easter is not just another getaway time. It reminds us of the most important Good News that we could ever wish to hear.

All of history before that first Easter pointed forward to those events, with all kinds of pictures and stories everywhere around the world telling of how things started out Good, then got Bad, and that the Bad needs to be fixed by a Great Hero, who would set things right and make it all Good again.

We need to admit that we are just as much in need of forgiveness as Adam and Eve, and in fact all people of all time, since we have all failed. We all have tried to be boss

of our own lives, but that has led to mostly Bad rather than Good. We have all turned our back on Him and need to turn around, or as the Bible says, we need to be born again.

We could continue to try running our own lives, to suit ourselves. But we can't do anything to make ourselves good, we can only trust God to do it for us. So let us trust God, Who raised Jesus from the grave, accept His forgiveness, and let Him guide us instead.

5. Our destination

Christmas was the beginning of the Good News Plan (Luke 2:8-12).

The Resurrection which we remember today was the next stage.

But ultimately, this Good News never ends. Just before our second reading comes a picture of where we are going in life if we trust in what God has done through Jesus (Revelation 21:1-5)

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

That's gotta be Good News for anyone, and who would want to keep that sort of Good News to themselves?

Let us pray...