

Tuckingmill Baptist Church, Camborne



September 2020

Right back at the start of the Lockdown, what *really* shook me about the severity of the impending crisis was the surprisingly swift decision that school exams for 2020 were going to be cancelled.

I remember reading on someone's blog (or whatever) that his teenage son was literally dancing around the room in response. But it was going to apply to not just GCSE's and A-levels, but back down into Primary Schools too ... *no SATs!*

SATs, particularly, have always been a source of some contention. And the comment of one of our members that "you don't make a pig grow by keeping on weighing it" does make a lot of sense. But tests can be, generally speaking, of two kinds, constructive or destructive. It's just that the jury is out on precisely how



much of each facet is involved in the educational teaching regime that we have in this country at present.

So with *destructive* testing, the objective is to find just how much pressure or stress or whatever your test object can stand by *taking it to its breaking point*. You end up with a broken whatever, and a reading: this object failed at a certain temperature, for example. But it implies that it *didn't* break, of course, *below* that temperature.

And then there are *non-destructive* tests. These are typically designed to prove success: to show that your object *is* fit for purpose.

The car tyre *didn't* explode when running at 120 mph with 60 psi internal pressure - so it will be safe to drive properly, at 70 (or *maybe* 80) mph and 32 psi.

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A successful test result can give a very real sense of achievement.

And, looking back over these last six months, I think we should actually award ourselves something of a pat on the back. We have been tested, and succeeded. We have adapted to an enormous change that was forced upon us with almost no notice. Not that I was around to remember this, but I imagine that in churches (and all sorts of other organisations) around the country, too, there has been something of a “war-time spirit”.



We don't like what's happening around us. What we're having to make do with is far from ideal. But we are going to get through this together.

Importantly, allowances were generously made. Our initial attempts at “meeting online” were, shall we say, a bit jerky. We all had to get used to using technology that we hadn't touched before. We had some rather wobbly “make-do” solutions that we could never settle for, *long-term*, but we could muddle on with what we just had to do. It was either that or just give up meeting

together in any sense at all. Just hope that people would phone each other from time to time. Fingers crossed!

And yet that was then, and our “new normal” has now become a new routine. Most of us can lie in a bit longer on Sundays. There is no church cleaning rota to disturb our weekly routines. We may even have got used to the sounds of our own voices singing along to songs coming out of our computer speakers in our own homes - and can each have a glass of water (or even something stronger) at hand if the high notes are still too high.

It has actually become comfortable for us now, to a large extent. We “come to church”, coffee in hand, and don't have to brave any inclement weather. We can always have our favourite biscuit(s) after - or even during - the service, and sit in your favourite *comfortable(!)* seat.

In fact, getting back to something like “normal” now is going to be a huge effort for us. Personally, I think it's a bigger challenge than entering Lockdown in the first place.

Back in March, options suddenly no longer existed. We were *banned* from any in-person associations outside our own households. Everyone was going through those privations at the same time. We were very much all in it together. Sinking or swimming, making or breaking. It was “all hands on deck”, and everyone realised it.

The trouble is that the re-

versal of Lockdown is both partial and optional.

First, it's *partial*. There are still the "social distancing" things that mean we can't just pick up where we left off. Staggered arrivals and departures, masks, no singing, no so-



cialising, and so on. It is *so* different from what it used to be, and from what we want it to be again ...

And that's where the *optional* kicks in. There is no sudden legal requirement to go back to church. There is nothing saying we can't just carry on the way we currently do. We've survived like this for a few months now. We've seen how it can work. We can see the plusses of the various comforts we have recently become accustomed to. So ... why bother? Why the *rush* to get back to church?

Or, if we collectively feel that we should re-establish "a presence" in Pendarves St, there is perhaps the temptation that *they*, somebody else, should go through the various hassles of masks and autumnal weather and chilly rooms, because ...

Well, because what? I have to be really careful how I say this. I *know* that some of you reading this

really shouldn't be thinking to come back to church (church-in-person) yet. I am *not* trying to guilt you into doing so.

And there are some who have very little reason why they shouldn't.

And then, I reckon, are rather more in-betweens than we might prefer to think, in that region where real reasons just gradually shade into convenient excuses.

So the Chapel is cold (still rather too true, at times). It won't be the same (understatement!). No refreshments, no staying around to chat, to *fellowship*. And anyway, we're approaching autumn and then winter ... with cold, dark nights, rain.

Actually, I agree with you. It's a far less attractive option than usual, at present.

But is it possible that those kind of considerations - or probably more like feelings - just edge us, almost without realising it, into deciding that "it's still a bit too risky for me" ... so *I* will stay at home, while the others can go ahead. No, others *should* go ahead. *I* or *we* just can't, as yet.

Quick question. If it was a family do, would you make the effort, thinking the benefits outweigh the risks? If you can visit a restaurant again, socially distanced, of course, in what way is church suddenly so much more dangerous? If *one* of you can go out shopping, mask at the ready, can't that one dare a

church service, at least every other week?

If we do get the Internet set up at the Chapel over the next month, making it easier for some to stay connected at home while stuff hopefully starts to happen at the Chapel again ... will the strange new sort-of-comfortable that we have become accustomed to - the far less demanding, far less personally involving *on-screen* instead of *in-person* - will that argument of comfort and convenience win the day?

Oh, by the way. It *is* a family event. It *is* the family of Jesus Christ,

“the household of faith”, meeting together. There is *slightly* less pressure in these modern technological days, with digital communications. But the call to disciples of Jesus Christ is still the same:

[L]et us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, ... but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

(Hebrews 10:24-25)

Peter Ham

You can contact Peter Ham, TRBC's pastor, by phone on (01209) 212442 or (07818) 078135. You can also e-mail peter.ham@live.co.uk,

Church website:

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Zoom meetings - “online church”:

Still seeking to improve on this, but we've now settled on weekly meetings as follows:

Sundays: 10.30 and 6.30

Thursdays 7.00

	10.30 a.m.	6.30 p.m. (cafe church)
13 th September	Nigel Fox	Video: Christopher Ash
20 th September	Phil Willetts	Video: Christopher Ash
27 th September	“Harvest Festival”	Video: Ravi Zacharias
4 th October	Matthew 17:1-13 <i>at the chapel?</i>	following on from a.m.

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Grateful for Grace

(Max Lucado, from the *Bible Gateway*)

Why would God offer grace before we needed it? Glad you asked. Let's return one final time to the charge card my father gave me. Did I mention that I went several months without needing it? But when I needed it, I really needed it. You see, I wanted to visit a friend on another campus. Actually, the friend was a girl in another city, six hours away. On an impulse I skipped class one Friday morning and headed out. Not knowing whether my parents would approve, I didn't ask their permission. Because I left in a hurry, I forgot to take any money. I made the trip without their knowledge and with an empty wallet.



Everything went fine until I rear-ended a car on the return trip. Using a crowbar, I pried the fender off my front wheel so the car could limp to a gas station. I can still envision the outdoor phone where I stood in the autumn chill. My father, who assumed I was on campus, took my collect call and heard my tale. My story wasn't much to boast about. I'd made a trip without his knowledge, without any money, and wrecked his car.

"Well," he said after a long pause, "these things happen. That's why I gave you the card. I hope you learned a lesson."

Did I learn a lesson? I certainly did. I learned that my father's forgiveness predated my mistake. He had given me the card before my wreck

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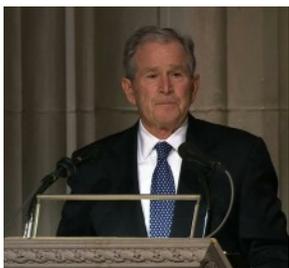
in the event that I would have one. He had provided for my blunder before I blundered. Need I tell you that God has done the same? Please understand; Dad didn't want me to wreck the car. He didn't give me the card so that I would wreck the car. But he knew his son. And he knew his son would someday need grace.

Please understand; God doesn't want us to sin. He didn't give us grace so we would sin. But he knows his children. "He made their hearts and understands everything they do" (Psalm 33:15 (NCV)). "He knows how we were made" (Psalm 103:14 (NCV)). And he knew that we would someday need his grace.

Don't forget the punch line

Mike Leite, from the *GoThereFor* blog

During a speech in September 2002, the former President of the United States of America, George W Bush, had one of those moments: to help



make his point, he attempted to recite an old saying. The problem was, he had completely forgot the punchline! Quite famously he stumbled through it, saying, "Fool me once, shame on... shame on you. Fool me... You can't get fooled again!" The correct aphorism is "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me". I don't mean to pick on poor old President Bush, but he does highlight the importance of the punchline: without it, the whole communication is rendered useless. It's

like telling a Knock Knock joke and stopping after "Knock knock!"

The reason I raise this is because throughout the Book of Acts, the apostles never forgot the punchline. Whenever they talked in the synagogues or in the public realm, they never forgot to mention the resurrection of Jesus. (Obviously Jesus is more than a punchline, though! In him we find the fulfillment of all of God's purposes and promises.) Whether they were speaking from the Old Testament or more generally about God, they always made it their goal to preach the risen Jesus. They knew that as they addressed both Jew and Gentile, to leave Jesus out of the picture was akin to telling a joke without the punchline: it defeated the purpose of speaking of God without proclaiming the risen Jesus. Doing so was only telling half the story.

We see this most sharply in Acts 17. As Paul visited Thessalonica and Berea, again and again, he made it his aim to preach the resurrection of Jesus. It wasn't enough for him to simply state to his fellow Jews that "it was

necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead”, but also that “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ” (Acts 17:3). To leave Jesus out of the picture is to forget the punchline.

We see the same picture in Athens: not only was Paul brought before the Aeropagus “because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18), but as he stood in front of them, he did not hold back from preaching the resurrection, even though it resulted in mocking (vv. 31-32). Even more boldly, he called on the Athenians to repent, for the risen Jesus is proof of the judgement to come (vv. 30-31).

Over and over again, we see in Acts that the apostles preached the resurrection of Jesus. They knew that leaving Jesus out of the picture would render their message useless. The same is true for us today: if we don't



mention the risen Jesus as we talk to people about God, then we've forgotten the punchline. We've missed the most important bit of information. It's interesting the way people react when the name 'Jesus' is used, instead of simply

'God': suddenly it makes it specific. The resurrection makes it even more specific, because it requires a response: either you believe that Jesus did rise from the dead and is Lord, or that the resurrection is false and Jesus isn't who the Bible says he is.

Obviously wisdom is needed for how we go about sharing the risen Jesus with people. I'm not promoting “Turn or burn” signs on street corners (though wouldn't that be bold!) Instead, I want to make the point that simply telling those around us that we believe in God, go to church or are Christian is to forget the punchline. Proclaiming the good news of Jesus as the risen Lord is what is necessary.

And so, like Paul, as our spirits are provoked within us as we look around at a world that fails to follow Jesus (Acts 17:16), let us not forget the punchline: let us preach the resurrection of Jesus and call on those around us to repent in light of the coming judgement (vv. 30-31).

We are far too easily pleased!

C S Lewis, from *The Weight of Glory*

If you asked twenty good men today what they thought the highest of the virtues, nineteen of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you had asked almost any of the great Christians of old, he would have replied, Love.

You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive, and this is of more than philological importance. The negative idea of Unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point.

I do not think this is the Christian virtue of Love. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire.

If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith.

Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea.



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