

John 3: 1-17 Lent 2 2020

May I speak in the name of the Father and if the Son and of the Holy Spirit Amen,
please sit down.

Second Sunday of Lent already..can you believe it.....Easter Eggs have been in Tesco since Boxing Day! And now we are already well into the 40 days of Lent , church colours have changed to purple, the colour of royalty but also the colour of reflection and repentance.

Lent always happens at this time of year, but unlike Christmas Day which is set on 25 December, Easter Day moves each year. Easter day is determined by the first full moon that falls after the vernal equinox - 21 March. This is because Jesus's death and resurrection occurred at the time of the Jewish Passover, which was celebrated on the first Full Moon following the vernal equinox.

This time of year is a time to spring clean, to clear-out and a time to open windows. I rarely get the urge to dust, but as the days get longer and the light changes, I feel the need to have a clear out, to put away my heavy coats and thick duvet covers and think about the promise of warmer days to come.

As a child I remember my Gran swapping the cushion covers and heavy curtains for lighter brighter ones at Easter. Although even with global warming, I recall we still experienced the 'Beast from the East' a couple of years ago at this time!

So Lent is a time to clean-up, not only the house but also a good time to ask ourselves have we made any mistakes/ relationships issues we need to clean-up...is there someone we need to apologise to?

Thinking of springtime, the budding leaves, blossom, bulbs and baby animals, Other Spring words I have been thinking of relating to the Christian faith include:

Open-up... we open up our Windows, we should open-up our Bibles..perhaps read more, open up ourselves to Gods presence through Jesus...

Clear-out....reassess what we do....I know I spend a lot of time scrolling on my IPad rather than interacting with Alan, Emma, Maisy, our dog and Millie our cat. We need to put away or remove completely from those things that keep us away from those we love or stop us interacting with others.

Sweep-up....in the 1920s Mr Hoover sold his first vacuum cleaner with the slogan "It Beats...as it Sweeps...as it Cleans' to save the chore of having to lift and beat carpets and rugs. I currently have Dyson but it's still a Hoover to me! And whilst it does a good job on a superficial level it never gets to that area next to the skirting boards, where the dirt remains until I take a damp cloth to it.

Lent is a good time to ask ourselves if we have any areas of our lives where we need to clear-up, get down and make an effort to wipe away those things we usually miss.

The passage, John 3:16 from our Gospel reading today, is one of the most famous, if not the most famous passage in the Bible: For God so loved the world that he gave

his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

For God so loved the world, because God is love, God created the world and every living thing in it that includes you and I. It doesn't matter who you are - white, black, rich, poor, young, old - God loves you.

In fact he loves us so much that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

in his conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus wants us to know that the way to eternal life is by taking the gift being offered to us. All we have to do is to believe in the giver of the gift, Jesus and take the gift he offers us- the gift of eternal life.

But what is eternal life?

Eternal life means escaping the power of death. This life is ruled by death. Everything that lives will die. Physically, there is no way to escape it.

But death wasn't the end of the story for Jesus -- God brought Him back to life through the resurrection on Easter Sunday. In the same way, death isn't the end of the story for us.

Eternal life is the kind of life that results from a close, loving relationship with our heavenly Father and His only Son.

Eternal life is a life that is full and free and forever. It is peace, joy and assurance. It is comfort, strength and hope. It's never-ending life with God, life in heaven after we die, but it's also abundant life here and now.

It's the kind of life, that I hope all of us really want. It's the kind of life we can never achieve on our own. It's the kind of life God gives us for free when we finally admit how much we need His help.

The gift of eternal life.

We should notice too that the gift of eternal life is there for everyone.

'For God **so** loved the **world** that he gave his only Son, so that **everyone who believes** in him may not perish but may have **eternal** life.'

'Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.'

John 3:16 - This is many people's favourite bible verse. And rightly so for it is at the very heart of the Gospel, the good news of Jesus. It's a favourite because it tells us about the free gift which God gives us. The free gift of eternal life to all who believe. But notice, too, what it says about the world.

God loves the whole world. That is what is so amazing. That God loved people who don't like him, who don't believe in him, who couldn't care less about him. God loves the world, and the world does not love God. That is what is so absolutely amazing. It's not just those who welcome him, but

everyone, ...of course he wants us to follow him and love him in return but his love is **Unconditional**.

When we hear that famous passage from John 3:16, "God so loved the world" do we think that it applies to ourselves – or do we think it applies to other people? Do we think, yes, God loved the world, God loved those other people, but God does not love me? Many people do not believe that they are loved by God or that they are lovable.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if each of us felt that we were loved by God and we were special in God's eyes? Wouldn't it be great if each of us believed that God loved us so much that God was willing to become one of us, through His son Jesus, and then die for us, each one of us, individually, on the cross.

Instead of saying, "God so loved the world," what would it be like to say, "God so loved me"?

Now we just have to believe it. My challenge to you for the week ahead is to try and remember John 3:16. Then, whenever you feel low or sad or lacking confidence, just think of these words and say them to yourself, "God so loved me that he gave his only Son for me." This is our core belief. It should be imprinted on our hearts. Any time that you start feeling unloved or unlovable, say to yourself, "I am loved. God so loved me that he gave his only Son."

God loves the whole world, unconditionally, and he offers all of us a great gift. It's so simple when we look at it like that. Happy Spring cleaning! Amen