

mp3/142/20th PETER ROBINSON EASTER!.MP3

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Preacher: Peter Robinson

[0 : 00] Squeeze on a bit. Caleb's feeling young again now. Remembers his days on the front row. Great. Now, it's Easter today.

Easter Sunday today. And we've been thinking, and we are going to be thinking, about Jesus being risen from the dead. And we're going to learn a memory verse. It's going to come up behind there. Now, all those Easter eggs are hiding the memory verse.

Because sometimes, unfortunately, Easter eggs are nice. But for a lot of people, Easter eggs hide the real reason for Easter. They think it's just about chocolate. Which it isn't, is it? No. So we're going to remove those Easter eggs, one by one.

And you're going to help me do it. Because I'm going to see how much you know about the real Easter. Okay? So I'm going to ask you some questions. If you get the question right, we'll remove an egg. And we'll find the memory verse.

All right? So here's the first question. Just pop your hand up if you know this question. On what day of the week did Jesus die? What day of the week? Freddy. Friday.

[1 : 00] Excellent. Let's have a look. Oh, that doesn't show much, does it? No? Okay. We'll have to see again. Another question. What was the name of the false disciple of Jesus who betrayed him?

Yeah, you tell me. Judas. That's right. Judas. What have we got now? Aha. We've got a few words coming up. That's good. You're doing well. I'm impressed. Sunday school teachers have done a good job.

Who? Here's a harder one, though. Who cut off the ear of a servant with his sword in Gethsemane? Oh, everybody knows this one. Oh, everybody knows this one. Who can I? Jumping up and down on your feet is not going to make me pick you.

It's the ones that are sitting the nicest. Yeah, I learned this from teachers with their hands up who I'm going to pick. Who shall I pick? I'll pick some of this side. Josh, go on. Peter.

Did you actually know that answer? He just told me. Yeah, I know. He just told you. Okay. That's what brothers are for. Okay. Another word. News. Okay.

[2 : 02] See if you know all this one there. What did the soldiers put on Jesus' head? What did the soldiers put on Jesus' head? Somebody over this side now, I'm afraid. Somebody over this side. You've answered one.

Did you know the answer? No, yeah. Crown of thorns. Well done. A crown of thorns. They did, didn't they? They were very cruel to Jesus and very harsh to him. That's Mark 1.15.

That tells us where our verse comes from in the Bible. Okay. Getting a bit more tricky now. Who was the first person to see Jesus after he was raised from the dead?

What was the name of the first person to see? You've answered one. You've answered one. Rachel. Mary. That's right. Mary was the first person to see Jesus, wasn't she? Okay.

Last one. And then we'll be able to read our memory verse and learn what it is. This is the hard one. Okay. For how many... I think it is, isn't it? For how many days did Jesus show himself as risen from the dead before he returned to heaven?

[3 : 00] How many days? No, Josh. Don't need... Think. Well, Ailsa hasn't answered the questions I'll ask Ailsa. Does she know?

40 days? Yes. Well done. That's right. 40 days. Jesus was seen by people. He had meals with them. He spoke to them.

Over 500 people saw him at one time. So he really knew he was alive. So let's find what our memory verse is. Okay. It's from Mark chapter 1 verse 15. Let's read it all out loud together. Okay.

The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news. Mark chapter 1 verse 15. Once more. The kingdom of God is near.

Repent and believe the good news. Mark chapter 1 verse 15. Okay. That's going to come back. And we're going to think about that. You can stay there for a minute because we're going to sing a song together now.

[3 : 57] And it's thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord, for loving me. So we'll stand and sing this song together. You boys and girls can stay there for a moment longer. Okay? Stay there for a bit longer. Let's stand and sing.

Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord, for loving me. Thank you, Jesus.

Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord, for loving me.

You went to Calvary. And there you died for me. Thank you, Lord, for loving me.

[5 : 03] Thank you, Lord, for loving me.

You rose from the grave to the new life you gave. Thank you, Lord, for loving me.

You rose from the grave to the new life you gave. Thank you, Lord, for loving me.

You can go back to your seat. Go back to your seat. I'm going to have a... I'll still need your help in a moment. Because we're going to be talking about pairs.

Pairs of people. And just a little bit of a quiz by introduction. And boys and girls, if you know the answer, you can answer first. But if you don't know the answer to these questions, then perhaps a mum or dad or gran or granddad can help you.

[6 : 14] So I'm going to put up one half of a famous pair from the Bible, a famous pair of people from the Bible. And you've got to try and guess who the next person is. Okay? Who the other person who makes up the pair?

So we've got Cain and... Jono! Abel. Cain and Abel, that's right. Cain and Abel. They were brothers, weren't they, in Genesis?

And then, okay, what's the next pair then? Isaac and... Hmm, a bit more tricky. They're going to get harder. Oh, do you know? No. No, that's a good answer though.

Yeah. But it's not the right one. Yes. Jacob? No, we've had Jacob. Okay, we've had Jacob. Yeah, Josh. Rebecca? Rebecca? No.

That was his wife. That's true though, but no. Tricky. Yeah, go on. You saw. No. Isaac and...

[7 : 11] No. He's... Ishmael. Yes, Ishmael. Sorry about that. Yeah. Not quite as easy as I thought it was going to be.

Working with a different congregation when I did this before, obviously. A bit sharper. They can't get rid of me now.

I've been inducted. They're stuck with me now, I'm afraid. All right. Isaac and Ishmael. Jacob and... Are you getting the flow now? Are you getting the idea now?

Go on, Adam. Well done. And a little child shall lead them. Jacob and Esau. Well done. Okay. Last one. A bit more tricky perhaps. Ruth.

And... Think. Think. Think. Think. Think. Do you think you know? That's a really good answer, but it's not the one I'm looking for. That was her husband. That's right, Bowers. Yeah, do you know?

[8 : 12] Naomi. Brilliant answer. That was her mum-in-law, but it's not the answer I'm looking for. Orpah. Orpah. Orpah. That's right.

Here she is. Orpah. That was her sister-in-law. Now, what do these people have in common? Well, three of them are sets of brothers. The other one's a sister-in-law and a sister-in-law.

But there's something very, very different about each one of them. Each one of the pairs. One knew God and loved God and had a relationship with God and friendship with God.

The other one didn't. Cain, we know, murdered his brother Abel because he was jealous of Abel and his friendship with God. Isaac knew God, but Ishmael didn't.

Jacob knew God and Esau didn't. And Ruth knew the Lord and Orpah didn't. So there's these people, pairs of people. And the Bible's very clear that in our world, everybody is divided into two possible places.

[9 : 14] Either we know God as our friend or we don't know God. Either we have a friendship with him and a relationship with him or we don't. That's how the whole of the world is divided into those sort of people.

Not into just religions or not into just ages or anything. That's the most important division. Are you a friend of God or not a friend of God? And you have to ask yourself, which one am I?

Do I know God? Is he my friend or not? Well, we're going to find out about different people, different pairs of people over Easter. Three different pairs of people.

And they're going to teach us about what Easter means and how we can know God as our friend as well. So I'm just going to change over to here. I'm going to use this lectern over here so I'm not in everybody's way.

Because we're going to meet the first pair of these people. And we're going to meet them at the cross. Okay, we're going to meet these people at the cross.

[10 : 13] Good Friday was that day that we celebrated and remembered that Jesus died for us on the cross. But when he was on the cross, we're told there were two other people there as well.

And here's what we read from Luke in chapter 23. Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. When they came to the place called the skull, there they crucified him along with the criminals.

One on his right and the other on his left. So there were these two criminals, two men, who had also been crucified.

One on the right, one on the left of Jesus. Being put to death. And they were being punished and put to death because they were robbers. It wasn't just that they went and took a few things from the shop.

Or they sort of picked people's pockets. To be a robber meant that they used armed violence. An armed robber. Usually they might beat people up or even kill people to steal their money.

[11 : 12] So they were very nasty people. And they had been caught. And they had been tried. And they had been found guilty. And they had been crucified upon the cross next to Jesus.

To die this terrible, horrible, painful death. And so there are these two men. Well, what do we know about them? We know that they were robbers. We know they were criminals. But we also know a little bit of what they had to say.

Because one of the robbers, one of them insulted Jesus. This is what he said to Jesus as he was on the cross. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at Jesus.

Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us. He was angry. Angry he'd been caught. And angry he was dying. And he took his anger out on Jesus. And he insulted him.

And he mocked him. And he said, come on then. If you're so great. If you're the son of God. Come on then. Get me down off the cross as well. He didn't believe Jesus could do it. He didn't have faith in Jesus.

[12 : 10] He just took out his anger against Jesus. He wanted to ridicule Jesus. But there was somebody else. Remember there were two robbers. Two criminals. The other one said this to Jesus.

Or said this to the other criminal. First of all. The other criminal rebuked him. Told him off. Don't you fear God, he said. Since we are under the same sentence. We are punished justly.

For we are getting what our sins deserve. But this man's done nothing wrong. He realized. He realized. That actually. He was somebody who deserved.

To be punished for his crimes. He realized that he was a bad man. But somehow he saw in Jesus. Somebody who was different. He saw in Jesus. Somebody who had not done wrong.

Who didn't deserve to die on the cross. Who had done nothing. Against the law. And so. He turned to Jesus. And he said to Jesus. Jesus. Remember me when you come into your kingdom.

[13 : 07] Remember me when you come into your kingdom. In other words. I believe Jesus. You really are. God's king. Who's come into this world. And though I'm dying. I want you to help me.

So that when I die. I can be with you. In heaven. And. What does he get? He gets a surprising promise. From Jesus. A surprising promise. Jesus turns to him.

And says. I tell you the truth. Today. You will be with me. In. Paradise. Even though he was a robber. Even though he was a criminal. Even though he was dying.

Upon the cross. As he deserved to. Because he put his faith in Jesus. Because he asked Jesus. Jesus. Promised him. That he would be in heaven. With him.

That very day. He'd learned something. Very important. And one of the most important things. We need to learn about Easter. Is this. He'd learned about forgiveness. Because earlier on.

[14 : 03] On the cross. Jesus had said this. And the man. The criminal. Had been listening. Jesus had said. Father. Forgive them. For they do not know what they're doing. Referring to those who are killing him.

Crucifying him. Father. Forgive them. And he'd come to believe. That Jesus could forgive his sins. He'd come to believe. That Jesus. Could make him right with God. He knew that he was guilty.

He knew they'd done it wrong. But he knew that somehow. This Jesus. Was able to forgive him. You see. This robber. Teaches us something. That we don't really like to learn.

It's something we don't really like to acknowledge. And that's that all of us. Are robbers. All of us are criminals. All of us have done wrong. In God's sight.

All of us. Are sinned. That's what the Bible says. Very clearly. It says there's no difference. Between anybody. All of us. Have sinned. And fallen short. Of God's standards.

[15 : 00] See. God is perfect. And when he created the world. He made a perfect world. And he gave us. Human beings. Life. And said. Live in this world. And do the things. That are right.

And good. And good. But none of us do. If I was to ask you. Put up your hand. If you've never ever done anything wrong. If you've never ever said a bad word to anybody. If you've never thought a bad thing about somebody.

If you've never done a harmful thing at all. Then none of us could put our hands up. But you see. Worse than that. The Bible makes it clear. That not only do we not love one another. But we don't love God.

And that's God's great command. There's one command. Really. That God has given us. To love him. And love one another. To love him. And love one another. But we don't love one another.

Because we're selfish. And we're greedy. And we're proud. Because we are people who are unloving at times. Aren't we? But worse than that. We don't love God. In fact.

[15 : 56] Often we don't think about God. We don't really give much thought to God. We go about our lives just doing what we want. Just pleasing ourselves. We don't think we need him at all. Except perhaps when there's a really real emergency.

We might sort of shoot up this sort of prayer. Hoping that God would do something. And then disappointed when we think he hasn't. But you see. We are enemies of God.

The Bible says. Because of our sin. Sin ruins our relationships. When we're greedy and selfish and thoughtless. It causes our friendships to break down. Our relationships to break down.

And so it is with God. We are separated from God. Isolated from God. Far from him. Unless something is done. We shall spend all of eternity. All of forever.

In separation from God. Away from his love. Away from his kindness. Away from his goodness. In a place of great sorrow. And shame. And darkness. But you see.

[16 : 52] Jesus came. To die on the cross. To bring us forgiveness. Instead of you and I being punished. For our crimes. Against God. And our sins against one another.

Jesus said. I'm willing to die in your place. I'm willing to take the punishment you deserve. That you can be forgiven. That you can be forgiven. Now we feel guilty.

Don't we? When we've said something. We feel bad. When we've done something wrong. There's a little voice in our heads. It's our conscience. That says. You shouldn't have said that. You shouldn't have done that.

You shouldn't have acted in that way. That's what God has put within us. To show to us. To prove to us. That we need that forgiveness. To remind us that we need it. But Jesus has come. That we might have that forgiveness.

That we might have it completely. And fully. So the first thing we learn from these two. Is that one was forgiven. And the other was not. That one had a wonderful promise.

[17 : 48] Of forgiveness on life. But the other had not. We learn that forgiveness comes at a price. Comes at the price of Jesus. Dying for us. Now we're going to sing again.

We're going to sing from our hymn books this time. Number 200. 236. Thank you. 236. That's me. Okay.

Do not see, do not see, do not see the feet of love, see the purple roof and crown of doors he wears.

So there's no cruel fear as he is the rule of cross, though the friendless man he climbs to lose again.

We worship at your feet, where love and mercy meet, and the guilty world is watched by love to see.

[19 : 13] For us he was may say, though help me take his ear, deep wounds of love cry out, Father, for me.

By mercy, by mercy, the Lamb will us save.

So we're going to meet our next pair, our next pair of people at Easter, and this time it's on that Easter Sunday morning, that Easter Sunday morning, and we read about them in John and chapter 20.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed. from the entrance.

She came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, they have taken the Lord out of the tomb. So it's at the tomb we meet them.

[20 : 31] They've taken the Lord out of the tomb. These two disciples are Peter and John. We're told Simon Peter and John, who he wrote this gospel account, this record of Jesus' life and death, and he used a sort of a nickname for himself, the disciple Jesus loved.

That's how much he appreciated and thought it was wonderful that Jesus loved him. He reminded himself all the time he was the one that Jesus loved. And so these two disciples, Peter and John, are told by Mary, she's been to the tomb, and the tomb is open.

The tomb is open. And Jesus' body is gone, and she doesn't know really what to do. She just sort of blurts it out. And so Peter and John are all excited, as you might expect.

They've seen Jesus die, and they know that he's been buried. But now, this third day, something happened. And so what do they do? They make a mad dash.

They run off, we're told. Here it says, so Peter and the other disciples started for the tomb. Both were running. Both were running. Have you ever had that excitement of something you've got to see?

[21 : 41] You run to go and see it. You just so want to find out what's going on. I'm sure that in their minds, there is a bit of confusion. Where is he? What's happened? Has somebody taken him? Perhaps his excitement, maybe he is alive.

Who knows? And so they run off. But John is the fastest of them. And we're told this. The other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.

He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there, but he didn't go in. So he arrives first, and he looks inside of his head, but he doesn't go in. But then Peter arrives, we're told.

Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.

So Peter goes in and sees. But then, John, who's been a bit hesitant, a bit cautious, he waits for Peter to come out, then he goes in as well. Finally, the other disciple who reached the tomb first also went inside, and we're told that he believed.

[22 : 53] He went in, and he believed. But what did he believe, and why did he believe? That's the important question, isn't it? What did he believe, and why did he believe? John believed that Jesus had been risen from the dead.

He believed that he was no longer dead, but alive. Why? How did he come to that conclusion? How did he come to believe that simply by looking in at the tomb? Because of what he saw there.

Remember, we've got quite a description of what was seen there, wasn't there? The strips of linen lying there. We're told that the cloth was folded by itself, separate from the linen.

We're told that it was laid out. That's all he saw, just the strips of linen that Jesus' body had been wrapped in by Joseph Arimathea when he had taken him and buried him in his tomb.

But what John saw was this. He saw that all the linen and the head cloth that had been around Jesus' head were laid out neatly. Because that's what the phrase means. It was laid out.

[23 : 54] Just like when you're told to lay the table for tea. You lay it out neatly, don't you? And so it's the same sense. It was laid out. Now, if somebody had stolen Jesus' body and taken it away, they just would have sort of grabbed the body with the linen, just taken it away.

There'd have been nothing left. And if Jesus had not died, really, but woken up and sort of been able to stagger out, then he would have sort of pulled the linen off and it had been all scattered over the floor.

But here was the cloths laid out neatly just as if Jesus' body had still been there. So what had happened? Well, John believed that what had happened had really happened, that Jesus had risen again with this incredible resurrection body that had passed through those linen cloths.

Later on in the chapter, Jesus is able to enter a room with all the doors locked because he is no longer the same body. He's truly alive and it's a truly physical body, but it's a resurrection body, a changed body, a transformed body.

It's a sort of body that you and I are going to get if we're Christians when Jesus comes again, one which is not limited, one which is not frail and weak and old and all the other things that's wrong with it.

[25 : 06] But he had this resurrection body and so John sees. There's only one conclusion. It can't be that he walked out. It can't be that somebody stole his body. It must be that he rose.

And so he believes, believes that Jesus is alive. So John teaches us the importance that Easter is all about, not only forgiveness, but, oops, wrong one.

It's all about faith. Easter is about faith. Having faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. See, everybody in the world and everybody here has faith. Okay, you are somebody who has faith.

You have faith, perhaps in your family. Faith that they will always be there for you. They will help you and love you and care for you. Your faith may be in money. That money can solve the problems of life and the difficulties that you face.

You may have faith in yourself. Well, whatever the world throws at me, I can cope with. I'm intelligent. You have faith in your own judgment. Faith in your own experience.

[26 : 09] Faith in your own intelligence or education. Everybody has faith. You may even have faith in your own good works. Faith that you're good enough to get into heaven.

Faith that what you do by the way you live, by being religious or by being somebody who's a nice person or gives to charity. Faith that you're going to be able to get to heaven and God will accept you because of what you do.

Everybody has some sort of faith. faith. But you see, the reality is that we need faith in someone we can trust. See, money goes, doesn't it? It comes and goes.

Unfortunately, even those that we love come and go. They may be taken away from us for one reason or another. We may lose them. We may have faith in ourselves, but, you know, we let ourselves down as well, don't we?

None of us are able to cope with everything. All of us have been let down by ourselves and by others. We need faith in someone we can really trust and we need to put our faith in someone who can deal with the biggest problem that we face and that problem is death because you and I are going to die.

[27 : 15] And who can we trust? It's great doctors we've got, great national health service, but they can't stop us ultimately from dying. So who can we put our faith in with death and with the end of life and with the seriousness of what happens after then?

Well, we need to have faith in Jesus like John did. That faith that believes in Jesus, the truth of who he is, that he really is the Son of God, that he really did come into the world and die for me upon the cross.

Faith to believe that he is alive now and put our trust in him. Faith to believe that he is the one who is the one we can trust for our death, for life everlasting, that he's the one that we can come to and know forgiveness for our sins and he will forgive us.

That he is the one who alone can bring us into heaven and make us right with God. We can never make ourselves right with God. Only he can do that for us. Faith.

Have you that faith, that trust, that belief in Jesus like John did? We've got one more pair of people to learn about but we're going to sing a song as we do before we do that and it's in our hymn books again.

[28 : 28] It's number 276. It's one of the great old Easter hymns. Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Saviour, waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord. 276.

Up from the grave he arose. Let's stand and sing this hymn. I did not sing this hymn.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[31 : 24] Amen. Right, one more pair.

I think I saw some of the glass in the ceiling shaking a little bit then when we sang that hymn. So, we need to be careful. Right, our last pair. Our last pair of people we're going to meet, they're going to teach us about Easter and what it means to us, are people who are out for a walk.

And, in fact, they're on a walk to a little town called Emmaus, which was a few miles from Jerusalem. In fact, we're told it was seven miles from Jerusalem, the place where Jesus had died and been buried.

And as these two were walking, they were talking. So, let's just pick up the story. Now, that same day, two of the disciples were going to a village called Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem.

They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. And as they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them.

[32 : 43] So, Jesus came and they're walking on their way to Emmaus and Jesus comes and approaches them. But they don't realize it's Jesus. They don't realize, they don't see, they don't recognize it's him.

Don't know why they don't recognize, but they just don't recognize Jesus is there walking with them. And as he's walking along with them, he asks them, what are you discussing together as you walk along?

And they said, well, we're talking about Jesus. And so, they began to say and tell him what they thought about Jesus. Jesus of Nazareth was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people.

The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to the death. They crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it's now the third day since all this took place.

In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning, but didn't find his body. They came and told us they'd seen a vision of angels, who had said he was alive.

[33 : 51] Some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see. You see, these disciples were very confused. They were very upset. They were concerned.

They'd trusted in Jesus. They'd followed Jesus. But then they'd seen him killed. And they'd hoped that he was God's special king who'd come into the world to rescue and to save and to bring people to God.

And they just didn't know why he died or understand it. And so Jesus speaks to them. And they listened to him. And this is what he says to them.

How foolish you are. How slow of heart to believe all that the Old Testament spoke. Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?

And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself. Jesus gave them this wonderful Bible lesson as they walked along, telling them and explaining to them that what happened to Jesus was just as God had promised, just as God had said hundreds of years before, that his special king would come into the world, his savior would come, and he'd die and suffer before he brought about the wonderful glory and blessing of God.

[35 : 09] At last, as they're going through the Bible study with Jesus, he's talking to them, they arrive at Emmaus. And so they say to him, please, can you stay with us and have something to eat? And so Jesus says, yes, he will.

They still don't know who he is. When Jesus was sat at the table with them, he took some bread, gave thanks and broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

They knew who he was. They knew suddenly, their eyes could see. Yes, this is Jesus, the risen Lord Jesus, he's alive. And so they rushed back to Jerusalem.

There's seven miles they've just walked, probably running a bit and sort of, and then catching their breath and running until they got back and they told their friends and disciples there that Jesus, they'd met with him and he was alive.

Until Jesus had shown himself to them, until that time, they'd been very sad. They'd been very confused. They didn't really understand what was going on.

[36 : 10] Perhaps you might feel the same as well. They'd found it hard to believe he was alive until they had met with him. And so this shows us that the third thing that Easter teaches us is not just forgiveness, is not just that we need forgiveness and that we need faith, but also that we need friendship.

See, Jesus died for us on the cross. He rose again to life for us, to live for us forevermore, but he did that for a reason, that we might know God personally, that we might have a friendship with him.

Some people know that they're sinners and they know they've done wrong. Some people believe that Jesus died and rose again, but they've never come to that friendship with Jesus. They've never come to know him personally.

He's a stranger to them. They know about him, but they've never met with him. I wonder if that's like you this morning. Jesus came to bring us friendship with Jesus.

When we know Jesus, then we have this wonderful experience that those disciples knew. We know the experience of Jesus being in our lives every day, of walking with us, and yes, talking to us through his word, the Bible.

[37 : 24] We know what it is for him to help us. We know what it is for him to be with us, and to be with us as we face the challenges and the trials and the difficulties of life. He never leaves us.

He's always with us. Now, can you remember, any of the boys and girls, because I'm sure that you're really listening hard, and I really, really appreciate how well you've done this morning.

Can anybody remember the beginning of our memory verse? Anybody remember? Rachel. The kingdom of God is near.

Then there was two, something else, wasn't there? The kingdom of God is near. Any of the boys and girls? I know all you mums and dads know it, because you've got really good memories.

After I told you off before, you've really sort of charmed up now. You said, I'm not going to be caught out again by him. Okay, let's look at it, shall we? It's this. The kingdom of God is near.

[38 : 24] Repent and believe the good news. Mark 1.15. What does it mean, the kingdom of God is near? Well, it means that Jesus, the king, is near. That's what it meant, because Jesus said it.

In other words, God's kingdom is where we know Jesus, and we know God as our king, where we are cared for by him, where he is the Lord of our lives, and helps us, and directs us, and provides for us.

So to be in God's kingdom is to be in a friendship with God, and know him, yes, as our father, but also as our king and our Lord. Well, how can we know that? How can we know this friendship with God?

How can we know him in this way? How can we know his forgiveness for our sins? How can we know his peace? How can we know that one day we'll be in heaven, which is the perfect kingdom, where there'll be no sorrow, or tears, or fear?

Well, here Jesus tells us what we have to do. We'll repent and believe the good news. Well, the good news is what we've been learning about Jesus. The good news is the fact that God cares for us, that God knows all about us, and in spite of our sin and our rejection of him, he sent Jesus, his son, into the world that we might, through him, be back with God, friends with God, forgiven, and have life everlasting, and not fear death.

[39 : 43] That's something of the good news, that Jesus is alive. And repent and believe these two things. We need to repent. That means we need to say, yes, I need to be forgiven, God, and my sins have separated me from you, and I'm sorry, and I want you to forgive me, please.

Please forgive me. Please thank you for dying for me, Lord Jesus, on the cross, so that I can be forgiven. But I don't want to live that sinful life anymore. I don't want to go that way that takes me away from God. I want to go the way that you want me to go, because that's the best.

Let's repent. And believe is, not just to know in our heads these things are true, but to say in our heart, yes, Lord Jesus, I want to trust you, and I put my trust in you.

I know I can't get to heaven by myself. I know I can't know God by what I do, but it must be you who's done it for me, and I trust you that you've taken all my sins away when you died, and I trust you that you can live in my heart and life and be with me every day.

And so the question is, those two things, repent and believe, is that something that we do? Is it something that we've done? We might know the good news. We might believe in Jesus in that sense, as we said before, but this morning it's imperative.

[40 : 57] It's vital. If we are to be a Christian, if we are to know God, then we have to repent and believe. I'm going to pray now, and I want you all to just bow your heads quietly, close your eyes, and I'm going to pray, and then at the end of my prayer, I'm going to pray a prayer for anybody, boys and girls or mums and dads, anybody who wants to know Jesus, who wants to know him as their friend.

Perhaps you've done that before. Perhaps you've never done it before. Perhaps you need to do it again. But if you want to pray that prayer, you in your heart, in your mind, pray to Jesus, about it, mean it, because that's important.

You've got to mean it. And Jesus promises, just as he promised that thief on the cross, that today you'll be with me in paradise. Today you can enter into the kingdom of God and know as your friend.

So let's pray together. Our wonderful God and Father, we're so grateful again that you have good news for us, not just on Easter Sunday, but every day of the year, that Jesus is alive, that Jesus is not only alive, but Jesus has provided and made for us that wonderful forgiveness and that friendship that we can know you, our God, in a real, in a dynamic, in a living way.

Lord, we know that we have to acknowledge something. We have to acknowledge our sin and Lord, we have to put our trust in you. And so, Lord, as we come to you now, we want to pray in this way.

[42 : 28] And Lord, if we mean it, help us to pray it with faith. Help us to pray it, Lord, in such a way that, Lord, you hear us and answer us. We know that you want us to pray.

We know you want our hearts and our lives to trust you and turn from our sins. So, Lord, help us now as we pray and come and meet with us. Oh, Lord, our God, thank you for sending Jesus.

Thank you that you sent him for me because I am a sinner and I've broken your laws. Please forgive me because of what Jesus has done.

Please give me a heart to follow you and do the things you want. I do trust you and I put my faith in you to be my God and my King and with your help, Lord, I want to follow you every day until that day that you take me into heaven.

Amen. We're going to sing our closing hymn. It's a wonderful hymn and we're going to stand and sing See what a morning gloriously bright with the dawning of hope in Jerusalem.

[43 : 55] There is hope because Jesus lives real hope and present hope. So, let's stand and sing this closing hymn together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

See Mary weeping, where is he laid? As in sorrow she turns from the empty tomb.

[45 : 27] Here is my seeking, all in her way, is the master the law, rest her life away.

The voice that's found to her ears, singing like stirring hope, bringing peace to us.

We'll shout till he appears, for he lives, Christ is risen from the dead.

Long in the Father, nations of grace, through the sweetening to close, made with certainty.

Father, bless him, glory and grace to the King, proud with power and authority.

[46 : 32] And we are raised with him, death is dead, love has fought, Christ has conquered.

And we shall reign with him, for he lives, Christ is risen from the dead.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[47 : 49] to come. Help us to know your leading and guiding. Help us again to live for you in that resurrection power that you've given us. For we ask it in your name and for your praise and glory. Amen.

Please be seated. Amen.

Amen.