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**A Meditation for Easter ..... For such a time as this.....**

Who would have thought it?

Surely, one of the many questions that spring to mind in the current challenge that we face, as we approach Easter 2020? Just a few weeks ago, I was enjoying the atmosphere and ambience of Madeira . Three weeks later, as I register the privilege of being there at that time, I did not realise what was coming around the corner - a pandemic that may well go down in history as the challenge of this generation.

Times and seasons fascinate me, and often only valued with hindsight. Looking back can be a valuable exercise. Lessons learned, experience gained, disappointments registered, and great times re-appreciated, but looking forward must also be part of our armoury – as difficult as that might be, particularly in the current circumstance.

We are currently at the beginning of our summertime, even though the chilly weather at present suggests otherwise. More significantly, we stand at the beginning of the Easter season....traditionally a time for reflection, appreciation and the embracing of hope and certainty. Given the pre-requisite for social distancing and the lack of some basic commodities, I notice no shortage of Easter eggs on shelves and their inclusion in the supermarket trollies at the checkout. Of course, the significance of this season goes much deeper, and probably more so in these Covid-19 times.

I reflect on that first Easter, preceded by the triumphal entry into Jerusalem when Jesus rode on a donkey. No social distancing on that occasion. Impossible to be more than inches away from the adjacent person who was shouting 'hosanna' and waving palm tree fronds, increasing the circulation of whatever germs and aromas were in the excitement - fuelled air. But as the days went by, the exuberance faded and Jesus became more socially isolated....and not for health reasons. Even some of those in his immediate friendship circle beat a hasty retreat. The Cross itself proved to be the ultimate expression of separation, even from the God who sent Him. 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken me'.. were the words issued from the isolation of Calvary, a bleak green hill, outside the city walls of Jerusalem.

It was after the passage of time that Jesus was freed from the enemy. Paul, the apostle, drew attention to this truth, and an old hymn writer expressed it in the popular Easter hymn with his words... 'Death has lost its sting' – a truth initially wasted on the minds of those who had been desperately disappointed and even heart -broken with the sequence of events . It would take time for their sense of purpose and hope to be restored and significance understood.

But then a new season began, with a renewed sense of belonging, engendered by the dark experience of the previous days, but with an appreciation of what was at the heart of community. Those followers of Jesus who had been in despair were suddenly filled and inspired by hope, and a new 'Joie di Vie' spread like wild fire....possibly even more contagious than any virus.

These are strange days for us all. Sadly the Coronavirus toll will be significant, and although 'eternal life' is still more available than hand sanitiser, it does necessitate an element of responsibility in the search for spiritual awareness and belonging. In these days of isolation, may we find time to evaluate, re-discover and appreciate truths that have been lost in recent years, and re-discover light, life and hope in a confused and perplexing world.

**Dave Pope: April 2020**

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