



FOCUS ON FAITH

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STANDING AT THE CROSSROADS

I'm sure many of us can look back at a number of defining moments in our lives. Times when because of an incident or perhaps a decision we've made or someone else has made on our behalf, life changes forever.

Of course these can be good or not so good events. In my lifetime there have been many great defining moments – Rosalyn deciding she would marry me and the wedding itself; the arrival of children plus promotions and other successes in my career to name but a few. And then there are the not so good: the loss of a loved one; redundancy or other work related setbacks; illness or an accident.

For me Easter seven years ago was a defining moment – it was the start of what has become known as “Prayer for the Week” and “Focus on Faith” in the Bridgnorth Journal. The seed of an idea I'd had was germinated by a willing editor and subsequently has been carried on with the weekly prayers and the regular column that I am privileged to compose.

We have 3 options: ignore, defer or accept – the choice is ours

So this will be the eighth time I've been able to write an Easter edition of “Focus on Faith” but to be honest it still saddens me to think that the real message of this Festival has been so corrupted. Yes I know there are reasons for associating Easter with hot cross buns, rabbits and chocolate eggs but whilst I hope I haven't yet made it to the “grumpy old man” category, I feel we've lost the plot when the only significance we place on this defining moment in history is symbolic.

The real message of Easter is about a decision that affects the lives of everyone that has ever lived or will live on this planet. It's a decision that affects not just the present but the future – and literally has eternal consequences.

Whatever we think about how Planet Earth and humanity arrived here (and remember evolution is still only a theory) the fact is that you and I don't exist in isolation. We may like to think that we are self-sufficient but in reality we are dependent on one another in a whole variety of areas. From the provision of essential physical services enabling our lives to be maintained to our needs for emotional security as well as our desire to achieve and make a contribution in life, we need other people around us.

But there is a third dimension to our make-up – the spiritual – and this is where Easter comes in.

Many people find the claims of Christianity just too far fetched to believe but that's because we try and approach the spiritual from a physical or intellectual basis. Now I'm not saying those aspects don't matter – I'm very grateful that I have physical and mental capabilities even if they are on the downhill slide these days. But this column is called “Focus on Faith” for a reason because faith isn't entirely dependent on what we can see, touch or understand either logically or academically.

There is no real historical debate about whether Jesus existed – secular documentation attests that he did. The ultimate question is was he who he claimed to be? And if he was, how does that affect us?

Because if Jesus was the Son of God and his life, his teaching and the miracles that he did indicate this must be a serious possibility, then his death and the claims that he came back to life again must have significant meaning too.

I've never seen Jesus physically but, in just the same way that I've never been inside a nuclear reactor and seen particles collide and yet believe electricity is produced through the process, I have enough faith to believe in him. And just as I know the effect of electricity – yes I've felt its energy on occasions – similarly I believe Jesus has the power to affect my life and the way I live it.

Easter is miraculous; it's the crossroads of history and eternity for us all. The Cross was a literal stake in the ground and it's the place where we have to make a decision too.

We have three options: to ignore Jesus; defer any decision about him or accept His assertion that he is the one who can enable us to live life meaningfully and intentionally – the choice is ours.

This Easter could be a defining moment for you. The event in history that we are celebrating may have happened almost 2,000 years ago but its relevance resonates today. It's worth taking the time to explore and consider the evidence but remember, Christianity is about faith in, and a relationship with, Jesus – the man who lived, died and rose again so our lives could change, for ever.

To find out more about the Christian faith and resources available plus information about services over the Easter period at local Churches together with contact details, please log on to www.lifting-jesus-higher.org.uk.