

## Low Sunday 2016

Exodus 14 vv 10-31 p69, Exodus 15 vv 20&21 p73 ψψ 118 & 150, Acts 5 vv 27-32 p1097, Revelation 1 vv 4-8 p1233, John 20 vv 19-31 p1089

*These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20<sup>31</sup>).*

We are sometimes told that things are really tough for young people today. I'm not sure about that. They are certainly better off in material terms than previous generations. Medical care is better than it has ever been. There are far more opportunities for travel than there used to be. Admittedly, the internet brings problems like cyber bullying and sexting, but the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages. House prices and job opportunities seem to be the main difficulties confronting young adults just now, but, even so, this isn't the first generation to have to live with parents or to rely on them for help with a first home. We employ tens of thousands of migrant workers because British youngsters no longer have to accept poorly paid menial work. Admittedly, teenagers no longer get their university education paid for like my generation, but then so many more of them now get the opportunity to go to college than my contemporaries did. So I'm not sure that young people today have it tougher than previous generations. Maybe they do; maybe they don't. At least there isn't a war on as there was when my parents and grandparents were young.

Where young people quite definitely are at a disadvantage today is that they are deprived of the knowledge of God. Religion has been marginalised in our society. We no longer teach children the Bible stories. We no longer say our prayers with them. There is always something better to do on a Sunday than go to church or Sunday School. Religious education has become learning about what other people believe, not being nurtured in the Christian faith. Increasingly, public demonstrations of Christian faith are discouraged by officialdom.

This ignorance of God is the worst deprivation of all because it robs people of the resources we need to live. Without religion, we don't know Whom to thank for this amazing world and all the joyful things in our lives. Without faith, we have nobody to turn to in prayer when we are confronted by problems which we feel we cannot overcome. We are deprived of that sense of never being alone in the world if we don't know that Jesus is God with us, wherever we are, all the time, whatever happens to us. We do not have that sense of always being loved, of always being valued, if we can rely only on our fellow human beings for kindness and affirmation. They are not always kind. If human beings are just highly evolved apes, there is no rationale for our ethics. It's *survival of the fittest*, not *love thy neighbour*. If there is no overarching Providence, no omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent God Who is love, there is no reason to hope that the forces of chaos and evil won't ultimately triumph. If this life is all there is, everything is ultimately meaningless. We can't take our possessions with us when we die. Our achievements will soon be forgotten. There would be no enduring value at all in our lives if our lives were not hid with Christ in God. Death would be the end. And what is the end for non-believers? If there were no God, if there were nothing apart from the material world, could there be anything at all after death? If there is life after death, do we imagine that it is the same for everyone, irrespective of who they are, what they believe or how they have lived? Or do we believe, as the Bible teaches, that there will be judgment, that we shall all give account to God for the way we have lived. Do we believe in justice and mercy? Eternal life, we are taught, is to know God and Jesus

Christ Whom He has sent. Young people (and old people) are certainly deprived if they don't have this knowledge. These were my Easter week thoughts and my Low Sunday sermon. Roger.

