

April 2019



Dear Friends,

On the Alpha course that we are having at the moment, it quotes C.S. Lewis, the great Christian apologist and writer of the Narnia stories, as saying **“Christianity is either of ‘supreme importance’ or it is of ‘no importance’. What it cannot be is of ‘moderate importance’.”** This is especially relevant in regard to our Easter celebrations in April. If Jesus died on the cross for our sins on Good Friday AD33 and then rose from the dead three days later, then this is the supremely important event in the life of our world- measured by the fact that history takes its time from the birth of Jesus- BC and AD.

Tom Wright, in his book **“The Day The Revolution Began”** starts by saying that in AD 33 a young preacher called Jesus died a horrific death of crucifixion at the hands of the Roman authorities, as many who had fallen foul of the Roman regime had done in the past. His movement of followers had no power, no military might, and very little influence with the ruling elites of the Jewish protectorate. He writes

“Nothing had changed. Another young leader had been brutally liquidated. This was the sort of thing that Rome did best. Caesar was on his throne. Death, as usual, had the last word; except that in this case it didn’t. As Jesus’ followers looked back on that day in the light of what happened afterward, they came up with the shocking, scandalous, nonsensical claim that his death had launched a revolution. That something had happened that afternoon that had changed the world.”

I wonder whether we see that as true in our lives, that knowing Jesus as Saviour and Lord has made the vital difference in our lives, so much so that our lives can never be the same. It was true of our world, whether we believe or not in Jesus as the Son of God. Because from that moment on the Christian movement grew and spread and has influenced the whole world, and even the Roman empire fell under the influence of Christianity, with the conversion of the emperor Constantine in the 4th century, and its influence on the rest of the world since. It made a vital difference to the disciples who were transformed from a depressed and defeated group of nobodies to a group of people who spread the message and according to one historian, turned the whole world upside-down.

I wonder whether we see that as true in our lives- that knowing Jesus as Saviour and Lord has made the vital difference in our lives, so much so that our lives can never be the same, or is our faith an optional extra- something that helps us through life and inspires us to be ‘good people’, but little different from those around us.

God wants us to be different people and to know who we are in Christ, and therefore be the means by which the world is changed. In 1 Peter 2:9 it says **“ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”**

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If this is true, then God sees us as something much more than people who 'go to church'. He sees us as:

- chosen by Him specially- the objects of His love and affection
- Royal by nature, with the responsibility of representing God in our lives to others
- Priestly, with the duty of prayer for the world and its issues
- Holy, called to be different and to show God's standards by the way we live.
- A Nation, called to be part of a world-wide family and to see each other as brothers and sisters together with mutual responsibilities
- God's own people, with the security of belonging to Him and being the objects of His love and grace
- Given the task of making Him known among the nations
- Recognising that we have been rescued from the kingdom of darkness and called into the Kingdom of light by Jesus.

All this and much more has happened to us because of that happened in the three days around Easter AD 33. The revolution began then and is continuing today. The question is whether we are willing to be a part of the kingdom that God has established to change the world, or whether we are going to see our faith as a 'private matter' and our role is to 'fit in' with how the rest of the world lives. There is much work for us to do right where we are in Melbourne Chelmsford, if we are willing to be transformed by Jesus and take hold of His priorities. Let us make our 60th anniversary celebrations (of which more next issue) a time of deciding to make a difference for Jesus and to allow Him to orientate us to His agenda to build His kingdom.

**The fields are white unto harvest,
But O, the labourers are so few;
So Lord, I give myself to help the reaping,
To gather precious souls unto You.**

**The time is right in the nation
For works of power and authority;
God's looking for a people who are willing
To be counted in His glorious victory.**

**As salt are we ready to savour?
In darkness are we ready to be light?
God's seeking out a very special people
To manifest His truth and His might.**

**Here I am, wholly available;
As for me, I will serve the Lord.**

In Christian Love

Paul