

Letters from the Churches

Those of you who have visited Edinburgh may have experienced the famous 'Camera Obscura'. Visitors gather in a small, dark room around a large circular table and just as their eyes are getting used to the dimly lit room, a wonderful thing happens. Light shines out of the table, showing a panoramic view of the city. The table is not a table at all; it is a large lens, and it displays a mirror image of most of old Edinburgh. A sunny day helps enormously, of course!

People are entertained as they watch the scenery unfold: the castles, the palaces, the gardens, great gothic churches, and classical Greek buildings of Edinburgh are all clearly displayed on the Camera Obscura. It is an amazing event, giving each spectator a never-to-be-forgotten view of the whole city. They don't just experience a bird's eye view of the old city; it's almost as if they had been given a God's-eye view of the people and places of Edinburgh.

In the Bible we're often presented with the idea of an all knowing, all seeing God who perceives the big picture all of the time. But we get so caught up in our own personal lives, troubles, and issues that we easily forget that God holds the whole of creation in his view, and not just ourselves. It's in our human nature though for us to think that we can see clearly what needs to be done to put the world to rights, but only God knows what is really required.

So, instead of getting on our own particular 'hobby horse' and imagining that that the world's problems can be easily solved, we should ask ourselves this question: In his divine perception, what does God see that needs to be changed?

Perhaps the answer to that question is that he needs to change me first. The next question is – are we prepared to let him?

Reverend John Girtchen

Pink daffodils, red Brussels sprouts, 'Midnight Mystique' – the world's first black hyacinth – all have that 'wow factor' everyone's looking for... well every gardener perhaps! For others of us the 'wow factor' may be sought in a new car, computer game, exotic holiday, sports event or something else excitingly different.

Palm Sunday, when Jesus rode triumphantly into Jerusalem on a humble donkey, was surely a 'wow factor' moment in history when '... the whole city was stirred, and asked who is this?' (Matthew Chapter 21). Little did they realise they were greeting the 'wow factor' of all time, Jesus. However, few of us would readily put Good Friday in the 'wow factor' bracket despite the fact it was a 'good' day for humankind because Jesus took our sins and paid the price for them. His suffering, endured for every one of us, makes us want to label it the world's worst 'woe factor' day, BUT as a preacher at a black church in West Philadelphia, USA, put it one Good Friday, 'it's Friday.... but Sunday's comin!'

The ultimate 'wow factor' of Easter Sunday was first shared by Mary Magdalene as she met 'the gardener', but as with the Palm Sunday and the Good Friday crowds she too failed to recognise who Jesus really was. It was not until He spoke her name that she knew Him to be her risen Lord. Jesus calls to each of us – have you recognised Him as your risen Lord and Saviour?

You and I will have different 'wow factors', things that thrill us. Indeed over a lifetime our 'wow factors' will change, but the 'wow factor' that Jesus is alive and longs to be in a relationship with each of us should be the ultimate 'wow factor' everyone's looking for, the only one that is forever.

Happy Easter,
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