

EASTER 2019

Abridge Evangelical Free Church

Dear Friends,

On Sunday 21st April, alongside millions of others around the world, we will be celebrating Easter in Abridge, and that is good news for everyone. Why? Because the celebration, rooted in history, is such good news that J.R.R. Tolkien, the author of *Lord of the Rings* felt he had to invent a new word for it: eucatastrophe. As a student, I studied the course that he and his friend and colleague, C.S. Lewis had designed, and this was how I became so familiar with his work. He spent much of his time at Oxford studying (and writing) fairy stories. In the process, as a Christian, he came to the conclusion that all fairy stories reflect an underlying reality or truth. However desperate things are in the real world (that is, in our lives, in society and through history) there is, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, such good news that no word would do for him but eucatastrophe. And by that he meant such a reversal of things, that there is always joy to be found in the darkest of situations: every catastrophe can and will be turned into joy.

Here is what he wrote: “[The Christian] story has entered History and the primary world; the desire and aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfilment of Creation. The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of [human] history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy. There is no tale ever told that [we] would rather find was true, and none which so many sceptical [people] have accepted as true on its own merits.” (*On Fairy Stories*, pp 62- 63)

We love fairy stories because they always end happily ever after. That is a deep human longing and dream. And in the eye-witness records of the very first Easter Day, we discover that this longing has come true in history. Because Jesus has been raised from the dead, death itself along with all human suffering, has been dealt a fatal blow. A new age has begun. Jesus is the first fruit of the glorious and joyful harvest of history.

This is why the New Testament was written. This is why followers of Jesus worship on Sundays. And this is why our worship, including our songs, old and new, are so full of joy. And why Christians are so full of hope.

We wish you a very happy Easter, and pray that whatever your situation you may glimpse the great truth that because Jesus is risen, there is ultimately nothing to fear, and nothing that we cannot face.

If you are able to join us as we celebrate this great truth together, a warm welcome awaits!

Keith