

SERMON – PASTOR GREG
7.04.2024

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER. The Lord has risen! He has risen indeed!

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I am going to share with some excerpts from last weekend's THE AUSTRALIAN. As always is the case at Easter and Christmas there are fascinating articles regarding our faith in Jesus Christ.

GREG SHERIDAN: Easter is the triumph of the impossible and the unimaginable, the laughable story of the victory over death of the God/man Jesus 2000 years ago which is the pivot of human history.

GREG SHERIDAN: Today there are two billion Christians...However...in Australia, as in the USA, COVID was the latest blow to Christianity...40 million Americans across the last 25 years who used to go to church, no longer do so. As in Australia, a significant chunk stopped coming to church during COVID and haven't come back.

JOHN CARROLL: There are two meaning questions which confront all human beings, everywhere and in all ages: how should I live in a way that gives meaning to my life AND what happens when I die?

JOHN CARROLL: A Genevan philosopher, writer, and composer (1712–1778) Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that all human beings were 'noble savages' before being corrupted by civilisation. His famous line was 'Man is born free but is everywhere in chains'. Humanity could live in peaceful harmony if corrupting social influences were removed. The terrors of the French Revolution, Nazism and Communism were all influenced by such a teaching.

ARCHBISHOP OF THE UKRANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH: Hope is all what we all need- every human soul navigating life's challenges and moments of despair. All of us who are facing our own sinfulness. We all need hope!

MARK COLERIDGE (Brisbane Catholic Archbishop): Easter is a chance to roll away fears, anger, anxieties and depressions that block lives.

Some thoughts:

GREG SHERIDAN: "Easter is the triumph of the impossible and the unimaginable, the laughable story of the victory over death of the God/man Jesus 2000 years ago which is the pivot of human history". I wonder about this. Our younger people have grown up with the lies that truth is not absolute- truth is what is true for the individual and not for all. We are told that we are to be tolerant and accept all beliefs. Aboriginal spirituality is part and parcel of 'Welcome to Country' and the Rainbow Serpent is accepted as are Mohammed, Buddha, Jehovah and Krishna. And increasingly there is a re-awakening of traditional paganism. And many modern movies such as THOR and IRON MAN give the impression that there are many gods and many ways to find meaning in life. For many people Jesus is just one religious figure among the many. Easter is certainly not what is once was- football played over the all weekend and shops open and so forth. Certainly a challenge for the church.

GREG SHERIDAN: "As in Australia, a significant chunk stopped coming to church during COVID and haven't come back". A couple of years ago a young mum told me that her family had found other things to do during COVID and just lost the habit!

JOHN CARROLL: "There are two meaning questions which confront all human beings, everywhere and in all ages: how should I live in a way that gives meaning to my life AND what happens when I die?" WHY AM I HERE? IS THERE LIFE AFTER DEATH? The increasing suicide rates suggest that people are really struggling to find purpose and meaning to their lives. How can we help? What can we offer?

JOHN CARROLL: "A Genevan philosopher, writer, and composer (1712–1778) Jean-Jacques Rousseau believed that all human beings were 'noble savages' before being corrupted by civilisation. His famous line was 'Man is born free but is everywhere in chains'. Humanity could live in peaceful harmony if corrupting social influences were removed. The terrors of the French Revolution, Nazism and Communism were all influenced by such teaching". God says otherwise but it is not a palatable message: *There is no-one who is righteous, not even one (Romans 3:10); All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean (Mark 7); Everyone who sins is a slave to sin (John 8)*. Education, wealth, health, human rights and so on are all good and proper but they cannot change human nature- only God can do that (Eph 2)

ARCHBISHOP OF THE UKRANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH: "Hope is all what we all need- every human soul navigating life's challenges and moments of despair. All of us who are facing our own sinfulness. We all need hope!" Yes, we do need hope. And we need love (Beatles: All we need is love, love, love is all we need). Buy more than hope and love we desperately need to hear and respond to the first recorded words of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Mark: *The time has come. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news.* Peter's Pentecost sermon was not about hope and love- *Let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED, both Lord and Christ!* And the response? *When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other disciples, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptised every one of you!"* Inspired by faith, the people repented, were baptised and received the gift of the Holy Spirit AND forgiveness AND eternal life AND the promise of Jesus that he would be with them always- to the very end of the age.

MARK COLERIDGE (Brisbane Catholic Archbishop): "Easter is a chance to roll away fears, anger, anxieties and depressions that block lives". And this happens as we trust and believe the word of God and heed the call of Jesus: COME, FOLLOW ME.

EASTER gives a purpose to our lives: to live a holy life even as Christ has made us holy.

EASTER gives meaning to our lives: *1 Cor 15:58: Your labour in the Lord is not in vain.*

EASTER gives us the sure and certain hope that at our grave someone will cry out: He is not here! He has risen! He has risen indeed! Amen.