

Easter Sunday

Eggs, Eggs, Eggs

- Three hollow chocolate eggs ready to show: one should be empty; one should have some sweets or a small toy inside it; one should be broken
 - the illustration will be most effective if the eggs' packaging appears not to have been tampered with
- Ask how many people have had, or are expecting to receive, Easter eggs
 - has anyone opened them yet?
 - what was inside?
- Ask for three volunteers to help open the eggs
 - build up some expectancy....
 - what will be found when the wrapping is opened?
 - what will be inside each egg?
- We'll find out why we've got these eggs as the service goes on!
 - put up illustrations as each egg is opened...

Confession

- Start with the damaged egg (image)
- We are **broken** people:
 - we do things wrong; we make mistakes; we spoil our relationship with God, and our relationship with others
 - God wants to restore our relationships, so much so that at Easter his own body was broken
 - Easter is all about God bridging the gap between us and himself, paying the price for us
 - death cannot keep a grip on someone who has done no wrong, and so Jesus rose to life again on Easter Day
 - through him we can have eternal life!!
- The chances are that, even today, we have failed and are **broken** in one way or another:
 - we have failed to love as Jesus loved;
 - failed to do the things Jesus would have us do;
 - broken promises that we made to family, to friends, to God...
- **Image of tomb, stone closed over**
- When Jesus was placed in the tomb, a stone was put across the entrance:
 - a very real, physical barrier
 - just as real as the barriers we create by not listening to, and obeying, God

- Add 'SIN' to the **image**, and encourage people to think quietly for a short time about the things they have done today/this week
 - QUIET

Prayer

- Risen Lord, when you created people you made our minds to think your thoughts; our mouths to speak your words; our hands to do the things you wanted them to do; and our feet to go where you wanted them to go. But we are broken people, whose thoughts are often not your thoughts; whose mouths say things that hurt or upset; whose hands destroy and harm; whose feet take us away from you. Father, forgive us for the sake of your Son and give us a clean start through the power of your Holy Spirit. Amen
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Imagine!

- The Easter story is very familiar and there's a danger of getting complacent about it
 - the reality of the Easter narrative is that Jesus overcame death - for us
 - yet the amazement of the first Easter has somehow been lost over time

Visualization:

- Encourage everyone to close their eyes and to picture themselves with Mary, Mary Magdalene and Salome, walking along the dusty road. It's the third day since Jesus was killed. How does it feel?
- You come closer to the tomb where he was buried. Mary asks, 'Who will roll the stone away?' But you don't answer her. You're too busy thinking back over all the time you've spent together, all the things that Jesus has taught you, the example he has been to you. You hold on tightly to the perfume and spices and continue walking slowly, with sand and dust between your toes
- You arrive at the tomb to find the stone has moved. What do you think? What do you say? Slowly, quite apprehensively, you look inside the tomb, to see a young man sitting on the right-hand side, dressed in a white robe. He smiles at you. You attempt to smile back, as he says, 'He is not here. He is risen. Go, tell the disciples.' How do you feel?
- You turn with Mary, Mary Magdalene and Salome and go back to find the disciples. As you run back down the road, what are you thinking? How do you feel..?

Return

- Holding onto those thoughts and feelings, **return** to this building. When you are ready open your eyes, stretch and take a look at the people around you....
- How would we feel if we opened our Easter eggs, expecting them to be full of sweets, and found nothing? (image)
 - we'd possibly feel cheated!
 - how much worse, though, must it have been for the women when they arrived to find the empty tomb? (image)
 - a real mixture of emotions: sadness, fear, joy, excitement, expectancy, confusion
 - above all there was joy that their dead friend had returned to life
 - perhaps, though, their joy was less apparent because of all the other jostling emotions?
- That's exactly what emptiness can do - it leaves us confused, and feeling down
 - the women would have been feeling empty when they were walking to the tomb
 - but it wasn't over...
 - Jesus went on to do many more great things, until one day he returned to be with his Father in heaven
 - 'I'll send you someone else,' he said before he left them
 - this was no empty promise, either - he sent the Holy Spirit to fill people, and to change them
- So, which of the eggs are we most like?
 - a broken egg, in need of repairing and renewing?
 - an empty egg, in need of refreshing and filling up?
 - a full egg - filled with God's love and Holy Spirit?
- Broken eggs can become whole again. It's not necessarily easy, but it is possible to make something beautiful out of a broken egg!
- Empty eggs can be filled. (Fill the hollow eggshell with mini eggs) This would work even better if there are more eggs than will actually fit into the shell. When God fills us up, that love and joy should pour out of us to others!