



THE ARCHBISHOP
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Archbishop Stephen writes a message for Easter in today's [Sun newspaper](#). This follows in full

Portuguese man o' war, moon jellyfish, an albino muntjac deer, big cats, partridges and pythons are some of the unusual creatures to be spotted in the Southampton area last year. Or perhaps you spotted the camel walking down a London street, holding up the traffic and morning commuters? When things are not as we expect them, it can take us by surprise.

So I wonder what last took you by surprise? How did it make you feel? Did you love it or loathe it? Or perhaps it just left you a little bit uncertain.

I hope it won't surprise you if an Archbishop says, a wide range of emotions can be found in the Easter story. Watching Jesus be viciously and cruelly put to death on Good Friday must have made his family and friends angry, hurt and hugely distressed. But this turns to something very different as they discover on Easter morning that he is risen from the dead. As this event unfolds their surprise and joy is overwhelming. (If you want to read about it google John chapter 20 - one of my favourite chapters in the Bible). It's quite the story and it's a story so surprising that it can often leave us, like some of Jesus's first followers, wondering, perplexed or with plenty of questions.

The story of Jesus shows us that God is a God with a human face, a God with a human heart, a God who shares not only in the joys of life, but also the sadness and the suffering and death itself. Good Friday shows us who God is. It shows us that death is not the end. It shows us that when we suffer, when we die, we find that we're not alone. So Good Friday is both the most terrible day and yet, it's the most wonderful day. Because it's the day that we come to know that the God we see in Jesus, even shares our suffering and dying.

For Christians, what happened on that first Easter Day, Jesus rising from the dead, is an extraordinary truth. It changes, quite literally, the world. Nothing is the same again. But how do we know its true? Well the classic answer is we know it by faith and by our own experience of God, which can be difficult to grasp and a leap too far for many. But we also see its truth in the way followers of Jesus want to change the world. In the way Christians run foodbanks, and toddler groups, advice services and bereavement care, in the way we try to love our neighbour – whoever that is, or argue for the way the world should work with a particular emphasis of care for the elderly, the poor and those who have no home. And we see it in the freedom and joy of our praying and worshiping.

But like so many things in life, from learning to swim to eating a jellied eel for the first time, the only way you really find out is by having a go. The truth of the Easter faith is found in receiving and living out this faith. I do invite you to give it a try. You may just be surprised.



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