

EASTER – WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL?

Introduction: What makes Jesus different?

- Why has His teaching impacted the people and governments of the world?
- Ancient Rome tried to extinguish the Christian faith for 300 years, before a Caesar had a spiritual encounter.
- The ancient tribes of Europe were all tamed by the gospel shared by missionaries.
- Ancient Ireland was barbaric, violent, and offered child sacrifice until the gospel took hold, spear-headed by St Patrick.
- Revivals in UK and parts of Europe sent missionaries all over the world.
- Many areas of Asia, Pacific, South America, Africa, and India all have active Christians.

1. Peace through the Cross.

- Jesus already knew what he had to do.

Luke 18:32-33 *He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him and kill him. On the third day he will rise again.*

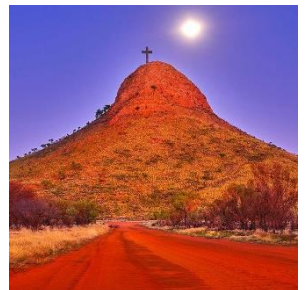
- He went to Jerusalem and said:

Luke 19:42a *...If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace...*

- What gives you peace?
- Not absence of trouble, but peace in difficult circumstances.

ILLUSTRATION: “MEMORY MOUNTAIN” NT.

The “forgiveness cross” is found at Haasts Bluff (Ikuntji), 230 kilometres west of Alice Springs. The 20-metre-high monument was erected atop Memory Mountain. Erected by Aboriginal people, it is their voice to Australia. (cont next page)



Memory Mountain Story:¹

The timing of the launch was significant because Easter 2023 was exactly 100 years since four young indigenous evangelists first preached the gospel at Memory Mountain, bringing a message of forgiveness to a culture that really didn't have any understanding of it. Their message hugely impacted the tribal peoples in the western desert, with hundreds coming to know Christ and being baptized. Memory Mountain is named in memory of this Christian heritage which is still being felt today by the Ikuntji people.

Indigenous people making such a bold statement about forgiveness is also significant in a time with reconciliation and recognition is in sharp focus.

"People talk about hearing the voice, and I think that's very important. This cross was their voice, this is what they want to do", [a spokesperson] said.

He added: "I remember one of the local leaders telling me why this is called the Forgiveness Cross. She said we don't hold Europeans responsible for our future, God is our future; and we're saying God forgive us all for trying to do things in our own strength."

- Jesus on the cross:

Luke 23:34a *Jesus said: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."*

ILLUSTRATION: Vyleen White story.²

Just after 6pm on Saturday, 3 February 2024, 70year old Vyleen White walked back to her car with her 6yo grand-daughter after purchasing some snacks for a Bible study. Suddenly, the pair were confronted by a group of youths, allegedly intent on stealing Vyleen's car. What happened next horrified the nation. As the little girl looked on, even though her grandmother had reportedly handed over her keys, one of the teenage boys violently stabbed her to death...

The death of a loved one is hard enough at any time; however, these circumstances were even more traumatic for the family, who, along with their grief, had the media at their doorstep.



¹ Vision Australia website.

² Vision Magazine Autumn 2024 p2

Their response has been nothing short of inspirational, with her daughter Cindy facing the cameras alongside African community leaders to take a unified stand against any kind of racist response, saying that she knew her mother would have “pursued peace with all diligence.”

- Pursue peace with diligence.

ILLUSTRATION: Leila and Danny Abdallah’s story:³

In 2020, Leila and Danny Abdallah lost three children and a niece when drug-affected driver crashed his ute into them as they were walking on a footpath.



Speaking of that terrible day, Danny said, ‘...I was faced with a question. A question no father should ever be asked. What are you going to do? You can either lose all your family by seeking revenge and remaining bitter, or you can forgive and only lose half your family. What a tough question!

...I forgave the driver that tragically killed our children alongside their cousin... and the reason I forgave was I wanted to be obedient to our Lord and Saviour and honour Him at whatever the cost.

In 2023, Danny went to see Samuel, the driver of the vehicle, while he was in prison. “It was a Holy Spirit moment,” he said. “He prays every day and reads his Bible. I asked ‘Why’? He replied: ‘Because I want what you have. Your act of forgiveness is the reason why I wanted to unite myself with Jesus!’”

- Look at these statements:
 - Do I lose everything for revenge or through bitterness? (Danny)
 - Your act of forgiveness is the reason I want to unite myself with Jesus. (Samuel, the driver)
- The reason Danny could respond that way is because of an encounter with Jesus – not just a belief about Him.

2. Hope through the Cross.

- Jesus’ title – King of the Jews
 - Term of mockery by the Romans
 - Mocked even by one being crucified with Him.

³ Ib id

Luke 23:40-43 *But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Jesus answered him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

- Hope for all who repent.
- 6th -9th hour – darkness
 - Curtain torn



Luke 23:46 *Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” When he had said this, he breathed his last.*

3. Justice through the Cross.

1 Peter 2:23-25 *When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

- Commit to one who judges justly.
- Jesus bore our sins.
- Live for righteousness.
- Jesus’ wounds bring healing.

4. Peace through Resurrection.

Luke 24:5b – 6a *Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!*

- My sin – the world’s sin could not keep Him down.
- Jesus – evil will be dealt with.
- We can have peace with God.

