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**Briefing 57: Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2021.**

Dear friends,

**New City Catechism Question 13: Can anyone keep the law of God perfectly?**

**Since the fall, no human has been able to keep the law of God perfectly.**

This is our last question before taking a break for Easter Sunday, but the answer is rooted in the reason for Easter. Why? Because the answer shows us just why Jesus HAD to die on the cross.

You see, if it were possible to keep God's law perfectly, then for some of us at least, no sacrifice for sin, let alone the death of the perfect Son of God, would have been necessary. If there is no sin in our lives, there is nothing to separate us from God and we could rightly claim a place in his kingdom on our own merits.

But that isn't the case, is it. No one is perfect in all they do and say and think. Some of us slip up more often than others. Some of us fail in more dramatic ways. But no one is righteous (totally perfect like God.) Some of us can keep our actions relatively pure but our words are cruel. Others of us present an almost perfect persona, with actions and words in check- but even then our thought-lives will reveal the true state of our souls. The sad truth is that no one can ever keep the law of God perfectly, no matter how hard we try.

The reason for that lies in the answer to the question: The Fall. Since Adam and Eve doubted God's word and sought a god-like glory of their own, the wills of all their descendants have been bent to serve self and not God. However respectable we look, however moral we might be compared to others, underneath we are all rebels and renegades from God's righteous rule, and we neither love him as we should nor love our neighbours as ourselves. The Book of Prayer describes us rightly: There is no health in us.

But that doesn't mean we are without hope. Like a sick person struggling to accept a terrible diagnosis, the treatment can start the moment we believe our physician. And in the case of our souls; Jesus is our physician, and his death on the cross is our medicine. That's why John can boldly claim: *"If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us, but if we confess our sins (accept God's diagnosis and ask for his forgiveness) God is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* 1 John 1:9. What a glorious reason to celebrate this Easter!

Yours in Christ,

*Dave*

## **IMPORTANT STUFF – DON'T JUST GLANCE- TAKE IT ALL IN!**

**Come + pray**

Prayer is the engine room of the church. In prayer we admit our weakness and turn to God for strength. In prayer we admit our ignorance and seek his wisdom. In prayer we turn from ourselves and our me-centred view of the world, and turn to God that his will would be done. Through prayer God reshapes us and then equips us to build his church and change the world. Come and pray that God may move in us.

**Saturday night at St Nicks from 7pm.** Bring a Bible, and join us to pray for ourselves + for the church.

**Private prayer in church.** Next week, St Nicholas will be open on Tuesday from 2 – 4pm, Wednesday 12 noon – 2pm, and Thursday 10am – 12 noon.

**Next Tuesday from 7am-8am.** Our regular early morning prayer meeting. Contact Dave for a link.

## SINGING TOGETHER OUTSIDE ON EASTER DAY

From this week, congregational singing is allowed as long as it is outside and social distancing measures are in place. So, both churches will begin their Easter Services with a short time outside, before moving inside for the remainder of the services.

For St Nicholas, the 'outdoor service' lasting around 10 minutes will begin at 9:20am, so that the live streamed service can still start at 9:30am. For St Mary's Graveley, the outdoor part of the service will begin at 11:30am. Some printed song sheets will be available, although a copy (same for both churches) is attached. You may prefer to download it to your device or print off your own copy. If you are still nervous about attending a service inside the church, you are very welcome to join us for the outdoor part.

**REMEMBER:** Whilst face coverings are not required outside, social distancing is. Please give others a good amount of space.

Please maintain social distancing when you are making your way into church, remembering to put on your face covering and to sanitise your hands on the way in.

If things work well, we may consider a full outdoor service in the weeks to come. So let's do it right!

### EASTER EVENTS: along with our usual services on Sunday, the following events are planned.

From Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March for 2 weeks: EASTER TREASURE HUNT in St Nicholas churchyard. Simply collect a pack from the Lych Gate and wander round searching for the clues. 10 Easter eggs are up for grabs!

Maundy Thursday at 7:30pm at St Nicholas Church: A service of Holy Communion. This will not be streamed.

Good Friday at 2pm at St Mary's Graveley: A service of hymns, meditation and silence for Good Friday.

Booking forms for the above are now available.

**ANNUAL PAROCHIAL CHURCH MEETINGS:** St Nicholas APCM will be after the morning service on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April, St Mary's APCM will be after the morning service on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April. Please put the date in your diary and do your best to come along.

Both churches are looking for new PCC members, and St Mary's Graveley are also seeking a new treasurer. If you would be interested in serving in any of these ways, especially as Graveley's new treasurer, please speak to Dave.

**CHILDREN'S WORK ON SUNDAYS:** We are planning on restarting our Sunday children's work at St Nicholas on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April, and then run it every fortnight until the summer. However, we do desperately need LOTS of new helpers (perhaps parents willing to sit in once every month or so) and some new people willing to prepare and teach lessons. DBS checks are required, but these are free and easy to do. Whether or not you have children, do please consider serving in one of these ways.

**OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD:** You can read and watch a report of the 2020 appeal, of which we were a part, here: [2020 OCC Special Report \(samaritanspurse.org\)](https://www.samaritanspurse.org/2020-OCC-Special-Report)

**THINKING OF BAPTISM OR CONFIRMATION?** If you are considering having your children baptised, please do get in touch with me. Our next 3-session baptism preparation course will take place after Easter, but it would be good to get dates booked in the diary. If you are looking to be confirmed into the Church of England, St Nicholas will be hosting a confirmation service on the evening of Monday 7<sup>th</sup> June, with the Bishop of St Albans presiding. Do speak to Dave if you'd like to pursue confirmation or would like more details.

**CROSSLINKS-** The mission organisation that look after Rachael and Bernie Muluuta, have released their latest newsletter. It includes an invitation to join a global prayer meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> April. All the details are here: <https://us2.campaign-archive.com/?u=439234122776147de73f01c1d&id=f323ed6312&e=e7bde7b975>

**CTiS:** Churches Together in Stevenage has issued an Easter briefing. You can find that attached to this letter