

# REVIVE!

***Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down ...  
For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came  
down, and the mountains trembled before you. Isaiah 64:1-3***

**L**ife and people sometimes throw unexpected things at us that are hard to deal with. But at the heart of the universe there is a good and loving God who loves to surprise us, to show us good things we do not expect, to fill us with a **sense of wonder**.

This is a season of wonder. Programmes like 'A Perfect Planet,' and 'Winterwatch' are regularly shown on our TVs, and their presenters are frequently bowled over with the intricate balance and incredible variety of nature. Lost for words, they can only describe what they see in terms like ... 'cosmic strokes of good fortune!'

'A wonder' is defined as something beautiful, remarkable, unfamiliar and unexpected that causes amazement, astonishment, awe and admiration. And the ultimate source of wonder ... **is God Himself!**

Wonder is woven into the whole fabric of Jesus' life and work. When He healed and forgave a paralysed man, for example, the crowd was amazed and filled with awe saying ...

*'We have seen remarkable things today!'* (Luke 5:17-26). We remember too at this time the death of the God-man Jesus on a cross to save us from our sins, an event no-one expected. And even more surprisingly, three days later, He explodes out of the grave, risen and fully alive! Who would have imagined that!

Wonder has to do with something (Someone) breaking in from outside of ourselves, to bring newness, fresh energy and new perspectives that transform us.

### **How is your sense of wonder today?**

Do you know the events in the life of Jesus, including the earth-shattering miracle of Easter so well that you feel a bit numb, not expecting that this same God can do amazing things in your life today?

Do you need some surprise and awe, something that moves you, wakes you and draws you afresh into something greater than yourself? Dare to invite Him to rend the heavens and come down! Even now!

*With love, David*

## Silent Harps

Psalm 137 is a poignant song in a time when the people of God, captive and in exile in 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, were unable to see beyond their present situation. 'By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept.' They were asked to sing but couldn't, and hung their harps on nearby willow trees. They had no hope, only able to grimly hold on and express hostility to the people responsible for their situation. Their eyes were unable to see any new possibilities, neither of new beginnings nor of new endings!

Maybe you feel like the writer of the Ecclesiastes who wrote, 'There is nothing new under the sun.'

Paul, on the other hand, had a heart filled with hope. 'What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived ... God has prepared for those who love him.' 1 Corinthians 2:9.

- ◆ Is there a situation where you feel hopeless, maybe trapped like the birds in this cage?



- ◆ Do you feel jaded, and feel you have seen everything there is to see?
- ◆ Bring what surfaces to God. Ask Him to renew you with fresh hope and a sense of wonder, with new eyes to see what He is doing in your life.

## I Wonder ...



When was the last time you stopped and ... wondered? Some of you might have seen one of the seven man-made wonders of the world, such as Christ the Redeemer statue and the Colosseum, or one of the natural wonders, such as the Northern Lights (pictured above) and Victoria Falls. Can you recall something big that astonished you? Or in the middle of a difficult day, tiny moments when you were aware of God's love and kindness?

- ▶ Wonder is ... the means by which God often reveals Himself to the world. It is woven into the fabric of our human and faith journey.
- ▶ It points to something from outside of ourselves, breaking in, and bringing newness.
- ▶ It makes our horizons expand, deepening our faith in God and what He is up to around us. It gives us fresh perspectives and new energy.

**And the language of wonder is ... PRAISE!**

Take a moment to reflect, bring to mind what God is reminding you of ... and let your heart open afresh in thankfulness and praise.

## Surprised by ...

**G**od has always been in the business of wonders. In the Old Testament, He created our beautiful world out of chaos. He delivered an entire nation from slavery in the Exodus. He intervened in countless ways at a personal level, to give for example children to the barren (Genesis 18:14) and supernatural food to widows in famine (1 Kings 17:7-16).

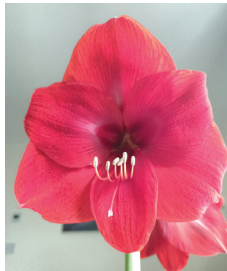
God can break in to do new things (Isaiah 43:18-19), because He is on the throne. He can put new songs of praise in our mouths (Isaiah 42:10), give us 'bread' that truly nourishes (Isaiah 55:1-2) and new strength as we wait on Him (Isaiah 40:28-31).

One of C S Lewis' most famous books is *Surprised by Joy*. More recently Rachel Gilson has also written of her journey to faith in Christ where every chapter heading has the word 'unexpected' in the titles – *Unexpected ... Birth, Vision, Options, Relationships, Ministry, Marriage, Celibacy, Blessing and Identity*. Looking back over your life, have there been key moments when God has surprised you, maybe reflected in these chapter headings? Or maybe something that brought a smile to your face? Think of Jesus putting bottles of wine on a dry Cana wedding table!

As spring begins, the Amaryllis plant is one of many incredible signs in creation of God doing 'wonderfully' new things!

*From this ...*

*to this in only a few weeks!*



## Jesus – what a wonderful life!

- ▶ **His birth.** It was miraculous! Born into a poor family, during a census revealing the Roman Empire's desire to control everything, His birth marked God breaking in with glorious new beginnings ... and the only response was songs and poetry by angels, Mary and others!
- ▶ **What He did.** He healed, eg a deaf and mute man, and the crowd were 'overwhelmed with amazement' Mark 7:37. Calming the storm, the disciples were amazed, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!' Matthew 8:27.
- ▶ **What He said.** After the incredible upside down values of the Kingdom of God taught in the Sermon on the Mount and on the Plain, where the hungry would be satisfied, those who weep would laugh, the poor would receive the Kingdom of God, and joy would be found in persecution ... the crowds were 'amazed at His teaching, because He taught as one who had authority' Matthew 7:28-29.
- ▶ **Who He was.** The disciples were filled with awe as they saw Him transfigured on Mount Tabor, with His face shining like the sun and His clothes as white as the light. Matthew 17:1-9.
- ▶ **His resurrection.** As the resurrected Jesus met the disciples on the mountain in Galilee, their wonder translated into worship, and they were transformed with a new identity, a new ethic, a new calling and a new assurance of His presence. Matthew 28:16-20.

Is there one of these aspects of Jesus you would like to ponder, reflect and be open again to wonder?

Meditate on Matthew 28:16-20. How is the resurrected Jesus breaking afresh into your life?



## How to cultivate the practice of wonder:

1. **Pause.** Slow down and stop. Wonder by definition makes us pause. Turn your eyes to the beauty around you. Focus on moments of kindness you have received in the day. Consider that you are fearfully and wonderfully made. Look for what God is up to, and where He's at.
2. **Perspective.** Allow what's given in the 'Pause' to change your perspective. Wonder by definition brings us outside of ourselves, giving us space for a new perspective. Allow the Holy Spirit to share something new, about this moment, the week ahead, a task you have to do. Welcome God's point of view, His leadership, His blessing.
3. **Praise.** Praise is oxygen to a life of wonder. It allows your experiences of God to grow deeper roots. There are a myriad of God's daily blessings, tiny and great things in your life, for which you can continually give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). There are many forms, such as a song, a poem, silence, the welling up of an emotion ... the important thing is to cultivate praise, and let wonder complete its process.

Have you got your PPPE on?

We are so grateful how the Lord has led, blessed and supplied, including seeing His hand on the recent four online Quiet Days on Elijah, a St Mellitus ordinands' retreat and the Refill and Refuel coffee mornings.

- ▶ Please pray for forthcoming events ... the online Easter Retreat (March 29-April 4) and Teaching Mornings on the Psalms (April 14, 21, 28), as well as God's wisdom regarding possible re-openings for Howard's Well and residential stays from May.
- ▶ Please continue to pray for God's leading and provision for the Centre as we press forward with a four key emphasis of online ministry, residential stays, Howard's Well and prayer itself.

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*"Now is the time to free the heart,  
Let all intentions and worries stop,  
Free the joy inside the self,  
Awaken to the wonder of your life."*

*From Benedictus, A Book of Blessings, by  
John O'Donohue*

**It has been a year since the first lockdown, and in the next newsletter, we would love to print some short reflections and testimonies of how you have, in the words of the last REVIVE!, found 'treasures in the darkness' during this difficult time. If you would like to contribute, please do write in by post or email to [magazinecchc@gmail.com](mailto:magazinecchc@gmail.com)**



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