

How beautiful are the “sweet” of those who bring Good News

by Lönngren Taljaard

It is that time of year again, and everyone who does not particularly hate egg-shaped chocolate is in on the fun and enjoyment. It can also be a somewhat confusing time as it involves the reason for the season. So right here off the bat, it is necessary to say that Easter is the pagan name for a pagan feast, that somewhere in history became associated with an event that is entirely Christian in origin – the cross death and resurrection of Jesus. It is not hard to imagine that what Christians actually celebrate when Easter comes around every year is the most significant aspect of our faith, and yes we throw in a couple of chocolate eggs and bunnies to add to the enjoyment, not that any of these are innately Christian.

That hot cross buns, chocolate eggs and bunnies are not germane to the cross death of Jesus Christ and his third day resurrection has been a bone of contention, or should I say a “bunny of confection” for Christians over the centuries. And saying this, all Christians can heartily agree that the consumption of buns, cross or happy, does not in any way contribute to the substitutionary atonement of Christ. These do not necessarily detract from it either. I want to warn us not to be overly critical of Easter cheer when reflecting on good and godly history. After all, Jesus was crucified during a Jewish time of feasting, the Passover, and as was the custom, lambs would be slaughtered, cooked, and enjoyed all over Israel in commemoration of Yahweh’s faithfulness in ending their 430-year bond of slavery in Egypt. This was indeed a reason for celebration, but more so what Jesus was about to do for not only Jews, but also Egyptians, Samaritans, and the rest of the world, was reason for celebration.

All the lambs slaughtered in Israel came down to one lamb, the LAMB of God, who, as Isaiah states, “⁵ ...was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for

our peace *fell* upon Him, And by His wounds we are healed. ⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But Yahweh has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. ⁷ He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth" (Is. 53:5-7).

Jesus made sure his disciples understood that He was about to become this slaughtered Lamb for them and the world when He instructed them during the Last Supper on Passover, ensuring them that there is no hope for them and their sin problem if they do not receive the benefit of his substitutionary death on the cross for their sins. Delicious lamb's meat and flatbread all of a sudden received a meaning infinitely greater than being delivered from slavery in Egypt at the hand of Pharaoh. Earthly deliverance is temporary, however the deliverance that Christ brings is eternal. After this our Lord then proceeds to make the payment for sins which no human could have done for their own, and this historical fact alone then becomes the sole means by which God renders as forgiven those who respond to Jesus through faith (Rom. 6:18).

This is the Gospel in a nut-shell and it is the goldmine of truth which every human being should embrace, even though they don't all do that. But the pre-history to this monumental event of Christ's cross, I want to add in this brief reflection on Easter, is also significant. Before the cross of Jesus, average Jews who had a yearning to be pleasing to God and who wanted to show their gratitude to God for delivering them from the evil rule of Pharaoh, reflected on and celebrated this truth through feasting. Skip ahead to the 21st century, and because of silly pagan hand-me-downs, some have lost, pun intended, a flavour for the connection between feasting and faith. Lamentably, at a time of year when Christians should be standing out among the unsaved for festivities, good food, and dare I say, a few chocolate eggs and bunnies, for joy for what our Lord has done for us, some instead act the Scrooge and condemn all things pointy eared and oval-shaped. This is a tad ridiculous considering how little bearing these pagan origins have on our lives. Let's rather have Luther's attitude, who took the melodies of well-known tavern songs, and tone-set them to Christian lyrics. Use sweet and delicious this Easter to declare the cross to those nearest to you who are still in their sin.

How may this look for you? Well, if you can bake some scrumptious hot cross buns, then use your baking skills, and bless your next-door neighbour with something nice to eat while looking for a way to speak Christ to them. If you

can't bake, just buy them, they are quite affordable, and add a few no-name-brand chocolate eggs and bunnies to the mix, and you might all of a sudden have an audience who will listen to your every word. You don't even have to be limited to these. You can actually cook lamb on Good Friday, how about that? Invite some unbelievers and tell them how everything links up theologically, all the way from slavery in Egypt to deliverance in Christ. But you can do what you like food-wise, and this is the beauty of what I suggest, because the connotation between food and benevolence is universally true from Tibet to Tahiti. Let's not be weird and awkward about these things, rather let's be "lekker." A good biblical argument can be made for the close connection between food and Christianity. In Luke's gospel alone Jesus is frequently dining, and when food is being served calling "...sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:32). We can do the same.

Believers have been blessed with the "Bread of Heaven" but many have not yet come and tasted how good He is, and they won't unless someone "serves" Him to them. Let's be "fresh" in our evangelistic zeal, not "stale." It's a matter of urgency.

"How beautiful are the feet of those who proclaim good news of good things!" (Rom. 10:15).