What is Easter about? Easter bunny, chocolate, having a rest, fun, new life, spring

It’s also a celebration … to find out what we are celebrating we’re going to read the Easter story.

But first: What's the worst thing that one person can do to another person?

**Jesus was a man who travelled around his country, teaching about God. Jesus knew God because God was his loving father.**

**The crowds loved Jesus but some religious leaders didn’t like what he was teaching especially his claim to be God’s Son.**

**At this time the people were ruled by the romans who were often mean to the Jewish people.**

**One Spring, Jesus and his close friends, called the disciples, went to the city of Jerusalem for the Passover feast.**

**Passover reminded the Jewish people how God had cared for them a long time ago and how God had rescued them from slavery. Because it was a feast there was a special meal to celebrate.**

**Everyone hoped Jesus was the King they had been waiting for.**

**But instead of arriving into Jerusalem as a mighty king on an impressive horse, as everyone expected, Jesus entered the city on a gentle donkey. People cheered but they were puzzled.**

**The most important place in Jerusalem was the temple where there was a special room, sealed off by a curtain. Now, although people knew that God was everywhere they believed that this room was very special, like this was where God lived, only one man was allowed to go in and only once a year. Ordinary people like you and me could never go in.**

**Over the next few days Jesus taught in Jerusalem but many of the religious leaders wanted to get rid of him. This wasn’t going to be easy. Jesus was popular and the city was very crowded with visitors. But then one of Jesus’ disciples called Judas, went to the bad leaders and said ‘if you pay me money, I’ll show you how to catch Jesus’. They agreed.**

**Jesus had the Passover meal with his friends. He took bread and wine and told them they were symbols of his death. His friends didn’t understand what he meant.**

**After the meal Jesus went out with his friends to a quiet garden to pray. Jesus knew that he was about to be captured and it wasn’t easy for him. He prayed to God for a mighty strength but trusted that God had a plan.**

**As he was praying Judas arrived with some soldiers to arrest him, instead of staying with him his friends ran away. Afterwards, Judas realised he had made a terrible mistake but by then it was too late.**

**Early on the Friday morning Jesus was brought in front of the religious leaders. They accused him of saying wrong things about God. Finally, Jesus told them that he was God’s son and this made the religious leaders even more angry and some of them started to hit Jesus. They sent him to the romans who had the power to put Jesus to death. The crowds turned against Jesus, and with the religious leaders shouted for Jesus to be killed. The Roman punishment for their enemies was crucifixion, being nailed to a cross made from pieces of wood and left to die.**

**Jesus was taken away to a place where everybody could see him and was put to death, crowds gathered around the cross and people laughed. Almost all the disciples had run away but some of the women who followed him, stayed.**

**As Jesus began to die, an awful darkness fell across the land, it was as though Jesus was grabbing hold of every evil and horrible thing in the world and taking it into himself.**

**Finally, Jesus died. As he did the great curtain in the temple that separated God from everyone else was ripped apart by some invisible force, it was a sign that Jesus had made a way to God for everybody.**

**Jesus body was taken by a good religious leader to be wrapped up and put in a tomb which was sealed with a heavy stone.**

**The romans ordered soldiers to stand guard around the tomb and night fell.**

What's the worst thing that one person can do to another person? What happened to Jesus?

All of these things are what led to Jesus’ death.

The pride and jealousy of the priests and they were power hungry too. The greed of Judas. The fear and anger of the crowds.

The Bible has a special word for all of this.

It’s called sin.

All the bad stuff, sin, leads to people getting hurt.

What often happens when people are upset or get hurt? It becomes a cycle.

When all this sin gets out of control it can lead to >>>> death

You might be thinking: are you sure this is a celebration? It doesn’t seem very happy.

Let’s carry on the story…

Easter morning

The women who followed Jesus, visited his tomb on Sunday morning to prepare Jesus body properly for the grave. But when they got there they found that the soldiers were gone and the heavy stone had been rolled away! Jesus wasn’t there but the clothes he had been wrapped in were neatly folded.

An angel in white clothes told them: “Jesus is alive!” The women ran back and told the other disciples. At first they didn’t believe the women but then Jesus began appearing to them.

It was certainly Jesus because he still had the scars on his hands from being nailed to the cross. It was very exciting news because Jesus had fought with death and defeated it. For 40 days Jesus spoke with his disciples and followers. He turned up in rooms and on roads, to men and women and on one occasion to hundreds of people.

Then once the 40 days was done, he met with his followers and told them it was time for him to return to heaven. With those words, he rose into the sky and disappeared from sight.

A question I have been asked: 'Why did Jesus agree to die?'

The Bible said that he trusted God and knew this was the only way.

He wanted to show us a new way to live and a way back to God.

Took all of the bad stuff and hurt but didn't give any bad stuff back. He broke the cycle and then he defeated it all, defeated death and sin and showed us this by coming back to life.

So what is this new way to live and the way back to God?

You might remember this slide, got some extra bits to add

Saying no to sin and love others (by listening to them and seeing things from their point of view)

Say sorry if we mess up forgive move forwards and be happy

Prayer:

Dear Jesus,

Thank you that you came to Earth as a human to show us a new way to live and a way back to God.

Thank you for being brave and trusting in God on Good Friday.

We’re sorry for the part we play in making the world less good place. Help us to say no to sin and to love others as much as possible.

Thank you that we can be forgiven, move forwards and be happy.

Amen