

Half-a-Dozen Easter Surprises

Props: an egg box containing six washed, upturned half-shells. Each shell has a number on top (1-6) and each conceals an object:

Egg 1 - a little toy donkey, if available, or a cut-out picture of one;

Egg 2 - a little white cloth;

Egg 3 - a red/black grape and a little piece of bread;

Egg 4 - a nail or cross;

Egg 5 - nothing;

Egg 6 - a crown.

Who likes surprises? **Me too**

I have six Easter surprises for you today.

Can I have a volunteer to help me?

I need you to lift up this egg, to see what's underneath it.

A donkey.

The first Easter surprise came on Palm Sunday, when the crowds were shouting "Hosanna to the King". The people were waving palm branches and shouting

Hosanna because they thought Jesus was coming to Jerusalem to be their King. The people wanted a warrior king to help to set them free from the Romans.

Butalong came Jesus, riding not on a war horse but on a little donkey.

Along came Jesus, knowing that by riding into Jerusalem he would be taken by his enemies.

Along came Jesus, so full of love that he was willing to die for us.

So here's our first Easter surprise:

Jesus used love, not violence, to change the world.

Would someone like to lift up the next egg?

What's this?

A cloth.

A cloth,perhaps, for washing something - or maybe for drying something.

Jesus and his closest friends were having a special meal together, when Jesus did something very surprising. He suddenly left the table, took a bowl of water and a towel, and started to wash his friends' feet.

Yuck.....he washed his friends smelly.....mucky feet!

It was normal for servants to be asked to wash people's feet after a long journey. But here was Jesus – the Son of God – washing their feet.

And then he said: *“If I, your Lord and teacher, has washed your feet, you must do the same for each other. I am giving you a new command.....a new instruction: You must love each other, just as I have loved you.”*

So here’s our second Easter surprise:

Jesus acts as a servant and commands us.....tells us..... to do the same: to love and look after each other.

We remember this event on a day we call Maundy Thursday. Maundy means *Command or Instruction*.

Can I have someone to lift up the next egg for me?

A grape, and some bread.

Jesus and his friends were eating the Passover meal together. They were remembering the time when God freed the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. The Passover meal has many different types of food, each food helps remind them of their journey to the Promised Land, it includes the sharing of bread and wine.

But when Jesus sat with his friends he changed the meaning. He said that when we share bread and wine together, we’re to remember him and how much he loves us. This is our third Easter surprise. Everyone around that table was going to let Jesus down - and he knew it. Judas would hand him over to his enemies. Peter would say he never knew him. All the others would run away when he was arrested. But Jesus

loved them anyway - and he loves each one of us, more than we can possibly imagine, no matter how much we might let him down.

Can someone to lift up the next egg for me?

A cross.

After he'd eaten with his friends, Jesus went out into the Garden of Gethsemane and there the soldiers arrested him. They took him and killed him on a cross.

This is our fourth Easter surprise. Jesus loves us so much that he died on the cross for all the wrong things we do. And he loves us so much that he will always be with us, even when things seem as hard for us as it was for him on that cross.

But that isn't the end of the story.

What's under our next egg - can I have a volunteer to look?

It's empty! There's nothing there.

The biggest surprise of all came that first Easter Sunday, when the women went to the tomb where Jesus' body had been put when it was taken down from the cross. But they didn't find his body, because he wasn't dead any more - he was alive!

Ok, let's look under our final egg - who's going to help this time?

It's a crown.

Our sixth and final Easter surprise is the difference that Jesus can still make to each one of us today.

When we feel sad, we can ask him to help us and be with us. When we're worried about people we love, we can ask him to help them and make them better. When we mess up, we can say sorry and ask him to help us to start again. The **biggest and best surprise of all** is what happens to our lives when we ask Jesus to be *our* King.....when we invite him to send his Holy Spirit to live in us.....when we get to know the almighty God of all creation as our loving Father.