

I would like to tell you a real-life parable...

Once upon a time, in a far-off country called London, I manned a table-top sale at my local School to raise money for the Church there. There was a lot to sell; some of it would have cost you a lot to buy in a shop. I decided that I would not charge a specific amount for goods. I put a basket in the middle of the table saying "all proceeds to Church" and waited.

People came up and looked at what we had. Occasionally they would say, "How much for this?" and my answer was always the same, "That's up to you – you decide"

I wish I had had a camera! Most people struggled with the idea that they could take something and pay as little as they wanted for it. Many were confused. Some, who I suspect hadn't got much to spend, were delighted. Some put in far more than the items were worth and others went away with an incredible bargain. In the end, I think our stall made more than most of the others, but my over-riding memory of the day is how hard people found it to accept that someone might give them more than they have paid for, without there being a catch.

They say that there is no such thing as a free lunch - but sometimes there is.

They say that you don't get something for nothing – but sometimes you do.

Maybe you failed in all your Lenten promises to yourself (I certainly did this year – there seemed like far more pressing preoccupations), but Easter is still here.

Maybe – probably – you don't feel very much like celebrating Easter this year. It feels different, all wrong. But Easter is here anyway.

Maybe you come today aware of your own brokenness, your own failings, your own troubles, your own anxieties.

And God loves and accepts you exactly as you are.

I don't want to say anything clever this morning – because Easter doesn't need any dressing up. God became man, lived among us, suffered with us and for us – and went on to prove that there is nothing that can separate us from his love - not suffering, not isolation, not even death.

So if you don't feel worthy of God's love – that's fine – because none of us are.

If you feel angry or frustrated with God, that's ok, and perfectly understandable. And he has proved on the cross that he can cope with that, and he will never leave you.

If you feel a bit baffled about the crucifixion and the resurrection, that's ok – Christianity is not about having a theology degree.

It's about accepting a gift.

We are all learning a lot about accepting help at the moment. Most of us will have to self-isolate at some point and we will become reliant on the kindness and generosity of others. Whilst we may find this difficult, it is also a great opportunity for us to learn about God, whose love and kindness are always without strings and always without limit.

Love came to earth and said, "Here I am" and when we crucified him, love came back and said, "I won't give up that easily". The love that Jesus lived is, I believe, the greatest force for good in this world and in our lives. Today, we rejoice in the truth that we do not earn our salvation, it is a free gift, lovingly given, gratefully received.

Alleluia, Christ is Risen, **He risen indeed, Alleluia**