

## SECONDARY SCHOOL

### It's Friday now, but . . .

To encourage students to consider the essential hope that is at the centre of the Easter story.

by *Brian Radcliffe* Downloaded from [Assemblies.org.uk](http://Assemblies.org.uk)

Suitable for Whole School

#### Aims

To encourage students to consider the essential hope that is at the centre of the Easter story.

#### Preparation and Materials

- One or more of today's newspapers.

#### Assembly

1. (*Open one of the newspapers*) Just look at this. More bad news.

(*Read two or three news headlines or summarize the stories*) It could make you very depressed.

(*Read two or three more news items*) It's as if the world's going downhill, out of control. Times are bad.

2. We're coming up to Easter, the central festival of the year for Christians. One of the ironic facts about the Easter story is that the day on which Jesus was crucified has become known as Good Friday. What's good about it? It sounds more like the ultimate bad news day.

Just think about it from the point of view of those who'd spent up to three years with this remarkable man. In a matter of 24 hours he had been the victim of religious prejudice, corrupt court procedure, torture, public humiliation, and death by the slow, painful process of crucifixion. Now, on Friday evening, he was dead. The dream was apparently over.

Now that's what I call bad news.

3. How do you cope with bad news? Do you get overwhelmed by the darkness, discouraged by the storm clouds, lose all hope for the future? Many people do.
4. Tony Campolo, the American preacher, tells of how a friend of his, an old, black American pastor, would preach on the Easter story. This man would go through the horrific events of that first Easter Friday and end each event with the words, 'It's Friday now . . . but Sunday's a'comin'.'

There was the bad news: 'They beat him and whipped him . . .' 'They put a crown of thorns on his head . . .' 'They nailed him to a cross . . .' 'He cried out and died . . .' But after each Friday moment the pastor reminded his audience that 'Sunday's a'comin'.'

Why the reminder of Sunday? Because Easter Sunday is the real heart of the Easter story. All the bad news is simply the prelude to the resurrection, the good news that God raised Jesus back to life as a sign that the power of evil in our world has been defeated.<sup>5</sup> That American pastor was talking as if this message could make a difference to the way we live now, and so it can.

You've probably heard the saying that 'every cloud has a silver lining', and the saying about there being 'light at the end of the tunnel'. Both encourage us to take a hopeful approach to life, particularly when bad things happen, as they frequently do.

The Easter story takes this a step further and encourages us to see a world in which God is ultimately in control, a world in which evil people and evil forces will not ultimately prevail. It provides us with something to hold out for when the going gets tough, when we find ourselves in a dark tunnel, when the storm clouds are gathering. It's a message of hope.

Hope tells us that we will not be overwhelmed.

Hope tells us that the light is always there, even when the tunnel seems never ending.

Hope reminds us that Sunday always comes.

### Time for reflection

Spend a moment considering the following thoughts. You may wish to turn them into a prayer.

- Be thankful for a God who has shown his power in our world through the Easter resurrection of Jesus.
- Be sorry for too easily allowing bad news to influence your view of the world.
- Make a plan to take some action that arises out of today's assembly. It may be to encourage someone who is depressed. It may simply be to bring a smile to other people's faces by smiling at them. It may be to grit your teeth and persevere in the face of today's difficulty.

### Music

'Beautiful Day' by U2

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