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This morning I would like to share with you one of my favourite paintings named ‘Easter Morning.’



This is a painting by James Janknegt, an American artist. Like the title ‘Easter Morning,’ the picture describes scenery of Easter at dawn and contains good insights worth considering and reflecting for our faith journey. I want to share my personal interpretation of the picture, and encourage you to reflect on it together.

If you look at it carefully, above all, you can find that there’s contrast of light and dark. In the light side, there are nine beautiful flowers put in a vase. What do those flowers mean? The purple flower signifies Jesus’ passion and death, and the white flower means his resurrection. And the other yellow and orange ones describe Jesus’ complicated inner-self in his life and ministry such as happiness, bitterness, fear, peace, etc.

Those yellow and orange flowers put together with the purple and white ones show us the Humanity of Jesus and how painful his journey to Calvary was. What’s remarkable is that James, the artist, painted the flowers like fireworks in the sky, which seems to proclaim that Jesus’ passion and love give us a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair as the prophet Isaiah prophesised.

Let us look at the vase containing the flowers. A building in the vase is the temple of God in the book of Revelation, from which the water of life flows. The water of life hadn’t only nourished Jesus’ life, but also has made us to be born again like Jonah. As Jonah was freed from a big fish, we can be freed from the eternal death thanks to Jesus’ amazing sacrifice represented by the bread and the cup of wine on the table.

On the table there is one more thing we shouldn’t skip; it is the shadow of the vase. What does it look like? It looks like a fish. The fish has been a

representative symbol of Jesus from the early church. I reckon this fish image of the shadow is the core of this picture because it seems to show the painter’s faith that Jesus is the centre of our life even though he is invisible.

On the other hand, in reality there is still darkness on Easter. We can see three houses in the right side of the picture. The light from those houses and the curtains reveal that they have nothing to do with the light of Easter.

Interestingly, James the artist drew three moons, which seem to stress the darkness in the world.

In front of those houses there is a man holding a basket of chocolate or eggs with his left hand and touching a topiary bunny with his right hand. They are symbols of Easter nowadays, but there is no life in them, and the man looks very unhappy in contrast with the man freed from the fish in the vase.

Easter looks one of ordinary days, in which flights take off and land continually, and people keep leading their busy lives in a forest of buildings in the city.

However, behind the scene, there is an invisible but very fierce battle between light and dark, life and death. It totally depends on our choice as to which side to turn, which way to select. James painted two different ways in the left and right corner each.

Appreciating this picture, a question came to my mind, ‘Where is Jesus?’ What do you think? I believe that Jesus would be standing beside the man in the right corner touching his shoulder with silence. Or he would be knocking on the doors of the three houses and waiting for answers.

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Two weeks ago, Lynn Mulligan, a member of OG church, introduced me a book, *Mister God This is Anna*, as Easter food for thought. The book is about Anna, a kindergarten child’s thinking about God. I’ve really enjoyed reading it, and I would like to finalise today’s message reading some part of the book. Listen carefully remembering the meanings of this picture we shared together.

“This is the curious nature of Mister God, that even while he is at the centre of all things he waits outside us and knock to come in. It is we who open the door. Mister God doesn’t break it down and come in, no, he knocks and waits. Now it takes a real super kind of God to work that one out, but that’s just what he’s done. As Anna said, ‘That’s very funny, that is. It makes me very important, don’t it? Fancy Mister God taking second place!’”

Amen.