

24th April

Memory Verses

Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth:
and the heavens are the work of thy hands.
They shall perish,
but **thou shalt endure**:
yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment;
as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.
Psalm 102:25-6

Today is the day for making sure you have your memory verses secure. If you have split these two verses up between you, say them together. Don't forget that someone might enjoy hearing you say them over the telephone – especially an older relative or friend from church. Can you still remember the other verses you have learned?

A Story to read aloud

Today is the traditional date of the entry into Troy of the wooden horse in 1184BC. The picture shows a tourist attraction at Hisarlik, in Turkey, which is thought to be the site of the ancient city of Troy.



The Trojan War began because Paris, Prince of Troy kidnapped Helen, Queen of Sparta in Greece. The Greeks besieged the city of Troy to get her back. However, things did not go well and the Greeks were not winning the war. Then the Greek leader Odysseus had an idea. Maybe the Trojans could be tricked. The Greeks listened to Odysseus's idea. It was a good one: they set to work.

First they took apart one of their wooden ships. Then they carefully – very carefully – crafted the wood into a huge image of a horse. After that they got into their ships and sailed home – at least that's what it looked like.

The Trojans were elated. The Greeks had given up! Troy had won and they could keep Helen! No one listened to the wails of Cassandra, the Trojan Princess who had, as a punishment for disobedience, been doomed always to utter true prophecies and always to be disbelieved. Quickly they gathered ropes together, opened the gates and dragged in the gift. Then they held a festival to celebrate the victorious end to the war.

Night fell. The Trojans slept. Something strange began to happen to the horse. In the shadows, bit by bit something opened up in its flank and silently, grim Greek warriors climbed out. Stealthily they made their way to the city gates.

And all this time the Greeks, far from going home, had actually been waiting. First they hid in their ships out of sight of Troy. Then, as night fell, back they came. They crept up to the city and now they were waiting in the darkness outside. The gates creaked open as the Greeks inside the city heaved on the heavy bars. In marched the armour clad warriors and took over the city, easily overcoming the unsuspecting Trojans.

I think the Trojans would have been much more suspicious if the horse had really looked like the one pictured above!

A Reading Project

Roger Lancelyn Green's masterly retelling of the whole of the story, *The Tale of Troy*, is worth reading and ideal for older children. Get a second hand copy if you can or request it from your local library.¹

Map work

The Greeks set sail for Troy from Aulis (modern Avlida) so you can see how far they had to go. They could sail up to eighteen miles in a day if the wind was helping them and they would have anchored on an island in the Aegean sea at night. You might be able to calculate the shortest theoretical time their journey would take from this information. Can you plot a possible course from island to island?

Something to think about

The Greeks had a reputation for being tricky and Cassandra was not the only Trojan to warn of danger from the horse. According to the Roman poet Virgil, a Trojan called Laocoon uttered these words: *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*, "I fear Greeks even if they are bearing gifts", a sentence which has gone down in history. The term "Trojan Horse" has come to mean anything which seems like a good offer but which has a trick hidden in it – although I think strictly speaking we should call it a "Greek Horse"! Here are two examples of Trojan Horses – perhaps you can think of some more.

An offer pops up while you are browsing the internet inviting you to click on a link which claims it will make your computer go faster. You click on the link – not realising that it downloads software to steal your credit card number.

Activists campaign for policies which they claim will save the environment from damage. Electors vote for the policies – not realising the policies give governments far-reaching powers to curtail their freedoms.

Something to make

This would be a wonderful opportunity to design and make a special container for your toy figures. Any cardboard box of sufficient size would do. Make a cardboard horse's head for the box – it can be flat if three dimensional is too hard (I expect the Trojan horse was a bit rough and ready as the Greeks did not have long to make it!) and draw the body of a horse and its legs on the sides of the box. You could cover the box in plain paper for this or prime it with some poster paint or household emulsion paint. Then attach a tail (wool, raffia, strips of paper, anything suitable) at the opposite end to the head. The Greeks had a sort of trap door, I suppose, and you might be able to make something like that too. If you are going to use the box to keep your figures in permanently, though, you will need to be able to open the top or bottom of the box. The picture above may inspire older children to make something more elaborate.



¹Second hand copies are available cheaply on Amazon. It can be borrowed for 14 days free here if you are signed up to the Internet Archive. <https://archive.org/details/taleoftroy0000gree>.

Another book to read and a picture to colour



Daniel Defoe (1660-1731), novelist and campaigner for religious freedom, died on 24th April 1731. His most famous book is *Robinson Crusoe* which some people say is the first real novel ever written. Like many Presbyterians of his day, Defoe was sadly led astray into Unitarianism (the wrong teaching that God is not the Trinity)² but this does not stop us enjoying many aspects of his exciting book. The book is based on a real adventure which happened to Alexander Selkirk (depicted left) who was marooned on an island in the South Pacific on his own for over four years.

One of the major problems Robinson Crusoe had to deal with was isolation. He finds talking to animals and even a tame parrot are not satisfactory substitutes for human companionship. Those of us who endured the early stages of the reaction to the Covid 19 epidemic empathise with his feelings! Robinson Crusoe gets hold of a Bible from the ship wreck. Here is Defoe's account of what happened next:

In the Morning I took the Bible, and beginning at the New Testament, I began seriously to read it, and impos'd upon my self to read a while every Morning and every Night, not tying my self to the Number of Chapters, but as long as my Thoughts shou'd engage me: It was not long after I set seriously to this Work, but I found my Heart more deeply and sincerely affected with the Wickedness of my past Life... the Words, "All these Things have not brought thee to Repentance," ran seriously in my Thought: I was earnestly begging of God to give me Repentance, when it happen'd providentially the very Day that reading the Scripture, I came to these Words, "He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance, and to give Remission":³

I threw down the Book, and with my Heart as well as my Hands lifted up to Heaven, in a Kind of Extasy of Joy, I cry'd out aloud, "Jesus, thou Son of David, Jesus, thou exalted Prince and Saviour, give me Repentance!"

We can all take a leaf out of Crusoe's book: even if we too are suffering from isolation: our communication with our God is not broken. We can still pray to Him and he still speaks through his word, the Bible. And we, like Crusoe, can find the repentance we need in the Lord Jesus Christ.

² For a lesson about the Trinity see November 7th.

³ Acts 5:31



Here is Robinson Crusoe on his raft. If you can print the picture you might like to colour it in or, better still, you can draw your own picture.