

2nd September

Memory Verse

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved,
we have a building of God,
an house not made with hands,
eternal in the heavens.

2 Corinthians 5:1

Something to read from China

That “15th of the eighth month” of 1925 (our 2nd September) was a perfectly glorious evening. For days paper lanterns had been for sale on the booths, children had carried lanterns with streamers, lanterns of every conceivable shape and size, the smaller ones being merely a pink paper replica of the lotus (water-lily) flower, into which they would ultimately dump a little candle. It was a particularly important festival.... the whole road for miles was a moving mass of men, women, children, babies, rickshaws, cars, closed carriages with Venetian blind sides, back and windows, all wending their way to Pai



Hai... there were families squatted among the trees picnicing, there were better-off people feeding in the cheaper tea rooms; there were expensive restaurants where rich folk ate... They were all extremely well behaved, if anything on the quiet side; but the Chinese take even their pleasures seriously....

With difficulty we reached the lake. It is one of three, twice the size of London's Serpentine. All the way round hung lanterns, and all found their reflections in the water below. Then at the big hall... arrived at from either side by delightful scarlet lacquered wooden pergola passages, and now jammed with humanity, we found the chief decorations, a veritable blaze of lanterns and light, and took a boat to see it all at its best. The flat-bottomed boats were the old Imperial barges... that in olden days were gaily decorated with velvet and satin hangings and wondrous pagan embroideries when visitors were present at the Dowager Empress's water-parties.... Here was the lake – and, ah, that wonderful eastern night, with not a breath of wind and every second person using a fan, a banner or a lantern. Several grown people carried real lotus leaves, and so tall were they, that they acted as umbrellas, for stalk and leaf was over six feet.

The little ladies in trousers with tiny feet walked hand-in-hand for balance, sometimes three or four together. They looked like dolls or marionettes. But there were as many unbound feet as bound,¹ and all had sleek, well oiled, well brushed heads with some flower or pin adornment.

The spectacle was amazing down to the smallest detail. Let us begin with the smallest.

Three or four little pink paper lotus flowers, each holding a lighted candle, floating at random in the water. This was cleverly managed by fixing them to a board and sending it off on its own on the lake's surface.

¹ Chinese women had their feet bound in childhood to prevent them growing. This was painful and crippling. By the time missionary Gladys Aylward (1902-1970) arrived in China the practice had been banned but was still carried out illegally. Gladys Aylward was appointed a Foot Inspector to the Chinese government, charged with the task of ensuring the practice was stopped! She was given permission to tell people about the Saviour in the course of her work.

Great clumps of real lotus with a light in the centre of each broad living leaf, all reflected in the water.

The lotus is a water-lily sometimes a foot [30cm] across and there is not one scrap of that aquatic fruit, flower and vegetable that is not used in China. It flowers in the summer. Its pink oval blooms are the size and almost the shape of a large breakfast cup and stand two to six feet [60cm to 2m] above the water on stiff stems.... The leaves are round and are ten, twenty and thirty inches across [up to almost 1m]; where the water is deep the stems can be seven or eight feet long [up to almost 2.5m].... the white root, which looks like a long turnip, is edible. The seeds, which look like almond nuts, are edible; the pods are sliced and eaten raw, the stems are used for mats and basket work and the leaves take the place of paper and baskets....

Swans, ducks and geese, made of white paper, life-size and cleverly put into shape with strips of bamboo or marsh reed each holding a candle inside its little body and floating in couples or dozens as fancy willed. There must have been thousands of these floating lamp-like birds.

This interesting extract is from *An Adventurous Journey* by Mrs Alec-Tweedie, published in 1926 in which she narrates her crossing of Russia, Siberia and China at a time of very great international tension. The extract comes from her time in Peking. The “big Hall” she talks of at Pai Hai still exists as does the park with its lake. It is now the Beihai Park and the beautiful building is now the home of the modern despots who govern China in place of the old emperors.²

Something to make

You can easily make your own paper lanterns.³

You need:

Coloured paper or card. Plain or printed. Old greetings cards will do.

Scissors.

Stapler. If you do not have a stapler you can use sellotape but a stapler makes it easier.



Cut a narrow strip from the long edge of your paper or card. Set this aside to use as a handle for your lantern.

Fold the paper in half, longest edge to longest edge to give a rectangle shape.

Now you need to make some slits in the folded paper. Holding the folded paper with the long folded edge at the bottom, cut up through the fold, parallel to the short edge of the rectangular shape. Do not cut right up to the unfolded edge. Continue to make similar cuts along the length of the folded paper, parallel to each other, leaving a border of uncut paper along the unfolded edge.

Now open out the paper. You should have a line of cuts through the central fold line and at right angles to it.

Now use the stapler to fasten the two shorter edges together to form a tube.

Stand your tube up on a flat surface. Give the top a very gentle pat so that the centre flairs out into a lantern shape.

Use the stapler again to fix the handle across the top. It should curve over from one side to the other and will allow you to hang your lantern up.

² See lessons for 15th April and 5th June.

³ This is just one type of simple lantern. Find others here: <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Paper-Lantern> You can find instructions for making a paper lotus flower here: <https://www.thesprucecrafts.com/easy-origami-lotus-tutorial-2540921>

Something to think about for older children

Ethel Brilliana Tweedie F.R.G.S. (1862–1940) was British. She was a member of the ruling elite who travelled with plenty of money, could afford servants and was fond of voicing her rather silly and sometimes nasty political and moral opinions. She was also, in her own way, an rather astute political observer. She was not saddened when shown the body of a baby girl floating down a river on which she was travelling and opined that the baby was better off dead than living in the poverty to which she was otherwise destined. Later she wrote of rural Chinese people:

I feel these people are far happier and healthier in mind than the factory hand and the slum dweller. They know contentment. Their daily wants are generally fulfilled. They are not to be pitied. The pity of it is the fact they were ever born. They are part of the 'unwanted millions' clogging the earth today.

I hope you can see the internal contradictions here. In other words, happy and contented people should not be born because they are unwanted – by the likes of Mrs Tweedie! In her generation there were plenty of people who had ideas about getting rid of the 'unwanted millions' whether they were handicapped people or Jews. The rise of Hitler's Germany showed up their schemes for what they were and for a while the discoveries of the horrors of Auschwitz slowed down the eugenics movement. If you did the lesson for 29th April you will have read about some of this and know what the term “eugenics” means. Sadly, this thinking is very much alive again today. Watch out for people who talk of over population or unwanted babies. You will find they are very willing to sacrifice *other* people for the sake of the planet.

Every human being, according to the Bible, though marred by sin, is made in the image of God. None are to be sacrificed for the benefit of others.

Some history to read⁴

*Sixteen hundred and sixty-six
London burned like rotten sticks!*

Everyone has heard of the Great Fire of London but how much do you really know about it? In the early morning of **September 2nd**, 1666, a fire started in a baker's shop in London, down Pudding Lane, a dirty crowded alley of timber-framed houses near the Tower.

Sparks from the blazing buildings were blown across the street and set fire to an inn. Hay was stored in the outbuildings and soon the flames were shooting far up into the sky. Samuel Pepys saw the fire from his house but thought that it was too far away to be of interest and went back to bed.

Soon the whole length of Pudding Lane was ablaze. Then the fire spread into the next street and engulfed warehouses filled with tallow, oil and spirits, the flammable cargoes of ships unloading at the nearby wharfs.

A German visitor to London described the fire in these words:

The flames obtained a complete mastery and raged the whole day, spreading to Grace-church Street and thence to Cannon Street, and along the Thames as far as the Three Cranes. As the inhabitants of the district realised that the fire could not be checked, they seized as much of their property as they could carry, and made off to wherever they could find safety.

⁴ Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today?* Book 1 available on the *Mothers' Companion* flashdrive <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com/>

Samuel Pepys,⁵ when he finally rose at seven in the morning, heard that more than 300 houses had already been burned down. He made his way to the Tower of London, and from a high window he could see London Bridge burning.

The King sent instructions to the Mayor of London telling him to pull down houses to make a break in the fire and stop it, but the Mayor did nothing. That evening, from a point on the outskirts of the town, Pepys described the scene as

one entire arch of fire from this side to the other side the bridge, and in a bow up the hill for an arch of above a mile long; it made me weep to see it. The churches, houses, and all on fire, and flaming at once; and a horrid noise the flames made, and the cracking of houses at their ruin. So home with a sad heart...

The fire raged for five days, burning down fifteen thousand houses and eighty-four churches. Two-thirds of the city had been destroyed and thousands of families were homeless.

In 1665 London had been struck by an outbreak of bubonic plague which killed about a fifth of the inhabitants.⁶ That two such disasters should have hit the capital city at this time was regarded by many godly people as a punishment for the fearful immorality of the city in general, and the king's court in particular. No warning from these events was taken, however, either by the king or Parliament.



Many people took the view that the fire had been started by disgruntled Roman Catholics. The idea that the king's Catholic brother, James, later King James II himself had started it persisted to the time of the Monmouth Rebellion and beyond and was one of the reasons cited for the rebellion itself. The monument to the fire was built in the 1670s and the words "But Popish frenzy, which wrought such horrors, is not yet quenched" were added to the inscription on the base in the 1680s, although removed in the nineteenth century. In fact, London, with its narrow streets overhung by the upper stories of timber houses was very vulnerable to such a disaster and it was probably an accident: like all disasters it was a warning. As Jesus explained in Luke 13 the message of all such events is "except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

At this time Christians were persecuted for refusing to worship in the parish churches. Ministers who would not swear that they would *never* disobey the king *whatever* he told them to do and would not perform all the ceremonies in the Church of England liturgy were thrown out of their jobs. They were not allowed to preach elsewhere and if people met together for this purpose they were called non-conformists or dissenters and fined and imprisoned. But the Great Fire of London was a blessing in this situation! The old writer Daniel Neal explains why:

In this general confusion, the churches being burnt, and many of the parish ministers withdrawn for want of habitation or places of Worship, the non-conformists resolved again to supply the necessities of the people, depending upon it that in such an extremity, they should escape persecution. Some churches were erected of boards, which they called tabernacles, and the dissenters fitted up large rooms with pulpits, seats, and galleries, for the reception of all who would come. Dr. Manton had his rooms full in Covent Garden; Mr. Tho. Vincent, Mr. Doolittle, Dr. Turner, Mr. Grimes. Mr. Jenkyns, Mr. Nath. Vincent, Dr. Jacomb, Mr. Watson, had their separate meetings

⁵ Read more about Pepys in the lessons for May 4th and 28th December.

⁶ See the lesson for August 8th.

in other places. The independents⁷ also, as Dr. Owen, Dr. Goodwin, Mr. Griffiths, Brooks, Caryl, Barker, Nye, and others, began the same practice; many citizens frequented the meetings, where the liturgy was not read; though the few parish pulpits that remained were filled with very able preachers; as Dr. Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Patrick, White, Gifford, Whichcot, Horton, Meriton, &c. But none of these calamities had any farther influence upon the court prelates, than that they durst not prosecute the preachers so severely for the present.⁸

If you visit the City of London make sure you visit the Monument to the Fire of London. Even today, when London has so many very tall buildings, there is still a good view from the top.⁹

7 Non Presbyterian dissenters.

8 Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans , or Protestant Non-Conformists* Vol. 4 p.447 (London, 1748)

9 <https://www.themonument.info>