

Party Games

As a child I loved party games.

My favourite was pass-the-parcel.

I remember waiting with excited anticipation to see if the parcel would be in my hands when the music stopped.

If it was, there was the thrill of carefully peeling off the top layer to see what was underneath.

Sometimes it was a chocolate, or a small toy, or some other trifle to bring joy to a child's heart.

Sometimes it was simply another layer whose sole purpose seemed to be to cover up the prizes, and heighten the suspense.

But as exciting as the small treats were, everyone was waiting for the main treasure – the big gift that would only be revealed when the final disguising layer was stripped away.

It was always something significant and worth waiting for.

It seems to me that we are all like those parcels.

We build up layer upon layer in our lives – through grief, joy, trauma, unexpected opportunities.

Some bring gifts and surprises with them, but others such as pain, shame and disappointment, simply weigh us down, until the treasure with-in is invisible and distorted.

God, however, sees straight through every disguise.

He looks beyond the masks we wear, the games we play, and the lies we live out of.

Deep within He sees the treasure that He planted there – His own image.

It is this that He is determined to unwrap, and reveal in all its glory.

People are perplexing creatures.

Even when we know that our accumulated layers aren't helping us, we cling to them compulsively – through pride, stubbornness or fear – simply because they are known.

Yet God, because He is loving and merciful, has made a way for us to let go of our fatally flawed selves, and reach for the authentic self within.

He has given us the one person who is equipped to carefully unwrap us, one layer at a time, without causing any damage.

He is the one who has no layers of his own: He has never been wrapped up in sin, or buried under failure.

His name is Jesus, and He is our saviour, our hope, our liberator, our life-giver.

Because he resisted all temptation to sin, He has earned the right to defeat death, which is the consequence of all sin.

But He also chose to pay the price of death, just as though He deserved it, so that our debt could be wiped out.

His body was broken, and today this bread reminds us of that.

His blood was spilt for us, and this cup is our reminder of his sacrifice.

This moment right now is our chance to remember and be thankful.