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The Rector writes:

'BONKERS !?!'

If you were asked to describe Easter in one word I don't suppose the above would be the one you chose, would it? But this Easter, Gary Lineker, former star England footballer, TV sports reporter and pundit became a most unlikely theologian as he posted the following tweet on Easter Day.



*'Funny how we get brainwashed as children into believing these **bonkers** religious stories. Might be true though I suppose.'*

When I read this the first time I felt quite angry, that Lineker was attacking the church and its teaching on its most Holy Day of Celebration – it smacked of disrespect. But as I thought about it I found myself wondering if in fact it might be a message worth exploring further.

Let's start with the word '*bonkers*' itself. The Oxford English dictionary defines it as meaning, mad or crazy. The origin of the word is not known, but it entered the English language in the late 1940's. So can it be applied to Scripture?

We live, we are told, in a rational and scientific world. In such a world some of the bible stories of supernatural occurrences, miracles, visions, might well seem '*bonkers*'. The creation of the world in 7 days, a man (aided by just three sons) building a boat big enough to house every species of life on earth, a burning bush, stone tablets not carved by human hands, a talking donkey, a man swallowed by a whale, three men surviving being roasted in a furnace – and we haven't left the Old Testament yet! Many of these stories sound too far-fetched in our modern world to be true. '*Bonkers*' might not be an inappropriate word.

But the last six words of Lineker's tweet provide a fascinating contrast. The stories might seem crazy, but they could be true! Though the

inference might be that they are not – his mind is not completely closed to the possibility of truth – it's just that they seem so implausible.

Here is a challenge for the church of today – plausibility. How can we persuade people that however unlikely it seems the Christian faith is true.

Jesus comes to earth in human form as an infant by virgin birth
Jesus dies on the Cross to save us from our sins.
Jesus rises from the dead to win for us eternal life.

These fundamental truths do seem '*bonkers*', but we know they are true. How can we convince others?

The answer must be in living our lives in the light of these truths by following Jesus' teaching, and trying our best to live by his Kingdom values.

When I first told my boss that I was thinking of leaving the bank to train for ministry – can you guess what he said? That's right – he said, 'You must be *bonkers*'. As I struggled with my theological training and various crises in ministry since then – I confess that I have often wondered if he was right! But I know deep in my heart that my life has been extraordinarily blessed by the privilege of serving Christ in his church.

Over the Easter weekend the Guardian newspaper published a story assessing the historical evidence about Jesus, concluding that, 'the abundant historical references leave us with little reasonable doubt that Jesus lived and died'. The more intriguing question is of course whether Jesus died and lived? We who believe he did must find ways of sharing this '*bonkers*' idea with Gary Lineker and others.

Yours in Christ,

Reverend John, your Rector.