

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

28 June 2020

er belong to the household of faith, are often the strongest of all.

Ending as Beginning. It is really painful and confusing when someone suddenly leaves a church. There are unanswered questions. There is often criticism and hurt. Damage is inevitable. Covenant promises are broken. Sometimes things are said that should not have been said and now cannot be unsaid. Misunderstandings abound. Something dies. There is bereavement. To cause harm to the household of faith is a very serious thing, as our readings today make clear. Being a member of a church means putting the welfare of others before our own needs or wishes. It involves sacrifice. It takes stamina. It requires stickability. The unity, forged by the Spirit, that joins us together has been broken. The expectation to take up the cross and follow has been interrupted. The instruction to 'make every effort' has been disobeyed. Evidence of maturity is lacking. The opportunity to move on, even to move away, in peace and with blessing, has been lost. And it takes real courage, once departed, to return in repentance and restoration to regain a place in the household.

Losing as Finding. One of the hardest things about belonging to a church is fitting in and finding our place. We all have our own distinct characters and personalities, and the many gifts that God has given us as individuals. Yet as-

serting ourselves, our own views, opinions, experience, wisdom, and ways of doing things, is never the best way to belong. What little we bring is for the benefit of the Body, and it is for the Body to discover and discern as we work together to build each other up and encourage one another. Losing ourselves into the Body of Christ is essential if ever we are to know who we truly are. 'Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it', says Jesus. This is not just about martyrdom (literally losing our lives for the sake of Jesus, as so many have done down through the years) but also about how we live with one another as a gathered family of those who are loved by Christ, and love him and each other too!

SUGGESTED SONG

Dear Lord and Father of Mankind
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y47vEE1zbDE>

BLESSING

Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, Lord. They rejoice in your name all day long; they celebrate your righteousness. (Psalm 89:15-16)

<https://rydebaptist.xyz>

Dear Friends,

There has been much in the news this last week about lockdown restrictions being further relaxed. In particular on Tuesday it was announced that churches will begin to be able to meet for services again from 4 July. This has raised all sorts of unrealistic expectations, and questions about this have dominated conversations over the last few days. You may be wondering about this yourself. When shall we meet again? Have we got a date yet? How long now?

The problem is, returning to our building for worship will be really quite difficult. We have not yet received any detailed guidelines, but it is clear that most of the restrictions we have grown accustomed to will still be in place. There will have to be social distancing. No singing will take place. No refreshments will be served. There will need to be thorough cleaning before and after meetings, and hand sanitisation will be necessary on entry to the building. A Covid-19 safe environment will need to be maintained at all times. The congregation would have to sit in assigned seats that are well spaced, in easy-cleanable chairs, and there would be no social interaction. Registers of attend-

ance will need to be kept to help with the track and trace requirements. The list goes on, and on, and that's only the things we already know we need to do. Numbers are also restricted to a maximum of 30 people, so hard choices will have to be made to decide who can attend and how. Furthermore, before any of this, we will need to have completed a very detailed risk assessment and satisfied our insurers and others of compliance. Not only is this a very heavy extra workload, but it is clear that this will not result in a regular service of worship as we understand it. It is clear that the answer to all the questions we may have is, 'not yet'; indeed the full picture will take some time to emerge.

This leads me to ask some very important questions such as, 'what does it really mean to be a church, and how can we go on being a church in the challenging and very different days that are ahead?' 'What is essential, and what is not?' The Apostle Paul makes it clear that it is the people, the Body of Christ, who are the church—and most definitely not its buildings. Furthermore the church needs the ministers that God has given it as a gift, 'to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of

Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.' (Ephesians 4:12-13) So we need to be a group of people with ministers. But there are other essential things in these verses too. What makes us into a church is our unity in the Spirit and our maturity as disciples of Jesus Christ, who need to be both built up and also to grow up in faith. For these things we look to Christ and to each other.

Our Zoom Sunday Morning Fellowship Meeting is at 10.30am and our Monday Prayer Meeting at 7.00pm. If you are able to join us, you will be welcome. If you are reading this sheet on your computer or device you can also click on the readings and songs. There are other helpful links at <https://rydebaptist.xyz>

CALL TO WORSHIP

I will sing of the Lord's great love for ever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm for ever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself. You said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant, "I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations."' (Psalm 89:1-4)

BIBLE READINGS

[Psalm 89:1-4,15-18](#)

[Matthew 10:32-42](#)

[Ephesians 4:1-16](#)

SUGGESTED SONGS

Beautiful One

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WiQzSGQ6wEA>

Hungry

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPZMEfkb0VQ>

PRAYER

Almighty God our heavenly Father, we enter your presence this morning bringing our worship and prayers in the name of Jesus, your Son, our Lord, Saviour, brother and friend. Fill us with your Spirit so that as we spend this time with you, we may know that you have gathered and continue to gather us together as the Body of Christ. Continue to build us up and bring us to human and spiritual maturity, even as we seek to work and pray for that in each other. Take all we are today, and prepare us for all that you want us to be tomorrow. Amen.

REFLECTION & PRAYER

When you think of Church on a Sunday, do you primarily think of 'going to church' or 'being the church'? Contrary to popular belief the most important thing about Baptist churches is not bap-

tism. We were only called Baptists by others, after years of being called Anabaptists (re-baptisers) because in the early days we baptised believers again rather than accept their baptism as infants. Baptism is important. Yet our central feature is that we are 'gathered churches' who maintain 'congregational government'. The church consists of baptised believers who God has brought together into a covenant relationship, like a marriage; and it is into this gathered community that Jesus pours his Spirit to move, guide and direct its life, its mission and ministry. So, for our thoughts and prayers: How do we creatively continue to build up and encourage one another as a gathered church, at a time when it is difficult to gather? How do we encourage those who do not have the online technology to be able to gather together with those of us who do? What forms and patterns and styles of gathered worship might be appropriate at this time of challenge and restriction? How can we increasingly do more things together? How can we ensure that those whom God has brought together are not torn apart?

SUGGESTED SONGS

Lord Reign In Me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzEkhTwIODc>

Mighty To Save

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CDDE6aFS-A>

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

Introduction. The teaching of Jesus in Matthew 10:32-42 is very powerful. On one hand it appears as if Jesus is saying that we need to reject our families; on the other it highlights the important bonds that exist between Jesus, his Father, and his disciples. We are familiar with the phrase, "blood is thicker than water", meaning that family bonds are stronger than friendships or other relationships. Here, Jesus makes it clear that our relationship with our heavenly Father through him is thickest of all, forged by the Spirit through his blood.

The Household of Faith. When we become members of a church we become part of the Body of Christ in practical and tangible terms. It is more than just a metaphor. True, some people do chop and change churches regularly—in quite a consumerist way, like doing their regular shopping—in a way that is quite foreign to the way that the Gospel and New Testament writers understand church, and which is undergirded by the teaching of Jesus such as here. Joining a church is a covenant relationship. We make mutual promises. We move from the ways of the world, and the values of human society and regular family life, into the household of faith. Many new Christians will talk about the conflict (and in some cultures, actual danger) from family when they came to Christ. That is why human families who togeth-