

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

12 July 2020

year's crop. Here the wheat or barley harvest is being described. The true flourishing and fruitfulness of the planted seed is not the fruit that can be consumed and eaten—that, on its own, results in stagnation and death (something that our contemporary consumerist society needs to learn)—but rather the many more seeds that can be planted to ensure that there will be a future for years to come (a much better picture of Godly investment in life, health and global well-being). God's word is active and effective. God calls us to proclaim his word, the good news of Jesus—the Word of Life—so that others may hear and respond to him too. But we are not called to bear witness that others merely become followers. Discipleship is not just about following, believing, but also about being witnesses, planting the seeds of faith in the future, paying it forward for the kingdom.

Word as Life. You could be forgiven for thinking from the discussion between the parable of the sower and its explanation in Matthew 13:10-17 that Jesus was using parables to make it difficult for people to understand and put his teaching into practice. In fact the opposite is true. Jesus uses parables precisely so that those who are committed to him and responsive to his Spirit will have their ears, eyes and hearts opened to the fullness and the wholeness and the healing shalom peace of the kingdom of God. Those whose hearts are like stone

and spiritually closed to the mysteries and possibilities of God's presence and purpose among us through his word, will never see, hear or understand what Jesus is saying and doing. Yet for his disciples Jesus has this word of hope. His Spirit brings enlightenment, life, and blessing. We often refer to the Bible as the Word of God, yet it is only that in so much as it contains and bears witness to the living Word of God who is Jesus, the Word become flesh. And it is this living Word that is our lamp and our light as we too continue planting seeds, bearing witness to his life and his love.

SUGGESTED SONG

To God Be The Glory
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-15v9iworAU>

BLESSING

Blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear.
(Matthew 13:16)

You will go out with joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. (Isaiah 55:12)

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and forever. Amen.

<https://rydebaptist.xyz>

Dear Friends,

Last week I read online somewhere an intriguing post that went something like this: 'The task of the preacher is to help people discover what the Bible actually says rather than what they think it says.' This is challenging, isn't it? It suggests that there is a gulf between the Bible and those who read it, or claim to read it. The only way to know what the Bible says is indeed to open it and read. Yet it isn't always that simple. We don't all read Biblical Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic, the languages in which the Bible was written, so we need good translations.

Despite the care taken, it is possible to mistranslate the original languages—and there are examples of that over the centuries, which is why new translations or revisions need to be made. Also language changes over time, and many words don't mean the same as they did when the first translations appeared. Not only do most of us need translations, there are many parts of the Bible that are difficult to understand straight away without interpretation. It is possible to misinterpret what is being said, and what passages mean can depend on their context—and that too can change, sometimes dramatically.

Let us also not forget how the Bible has been used in the past to justify all sorts of injustices: slavery, apartheid, bigamy, homophobia, beating children, subjugating women, and so on. These were often based on a genuine desire to understand and apply the Bible's teaching, but it is not difficult to also see the influence of human desire, prejudice and sin on these behaviours, practices and beliefs. So when we read the Bible we need to approach it with commitment but also with care. Two things are essential if we are going to read it and truly understand it as God intends.

Firstly, we need to approach the Bible with humility, recognising our own limitations and that we may often need help to understand what we are reading. Although we can relax because the things that are essential for us to grow in faith and our day-by-day discipleship are perfectly clear. Secondly, we need to be open to the Holy Spirit, who will be our translator, our interpreter and our guide as we read God's Word. When we get stuck we can bring it to him in prayer. And God gives his Word to his people together, so we never have to struggle to understand it alone. We only have to reach out to our sisters and brothers who travel with us on the Way.

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>

PRAY FOR RYDE 2020

Launched on 1 July 2020, the themes for prayer are being published daily. Go to prayforryde.org for more information, videos and the link to the daily 7pm Zoom prayer meeting. For those who cannot access the website, here are last week's themes: 5 July, Mental Health Services & Projects; 6 July, Nursing & Care Homes; 7 July, People Living with Addiction; 8 July, Surgeries & Clinics; 9 July, Emergency Services; 10 July, Street Pastors; 11 July, Open Arms. We will update the list here each week until 23 September.

CALL TO WORSHIP

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out of my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:10-11)

BIBLE READINGS

[Psalm 119:105-112](#)

[Isaiah 55:10-13](#)

[Matthew 13:1-23](#)

SUGGESTED SONGS

Be Still For The Presence Of The Lord
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZugvUQ4m90U>

Come As You Are
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HELQyZNnR-g>

PRAYER

Lord God Almighty, our heavenly Father, we thank and praise you that you have given us your Word. We thank you that through the pages of the Bible we discover who you are, and who you have made us to be. We thank you that we are loved by you, so much in fact that you sent your only Son, Jesus the Word made flesh, to live and die for us, to rescue us from the power of guilt and shame and lead us into abundant eternal life. Give us more passion for reading, and understanding, and applying your Word to our lives, we pray. Give us more confidence and expectation that you have yet more light and truth to break forth from your Word. May our thoughts, words and deeds remain in step with your Word and your Spirit, for this we pray in the name of Jesus our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

TO PONDER

Following on from last week's ponderings, are there things that you thought were in the Bible only to discover they were not? What is the clear message of the Bible as you understand it? What parts of the Bible do you find most difficult to understand? What things most prevent you from putting into practice the clear things that the Bible teaches? Brings these things to God in prayer; and if you have an opportunity this week talk about them with a Christian friend and share your experiences of reading the Bible with each other.

SUGGESTED SONGS

Nothing But The Blood Of Jesus
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYjhGeAIG6k>

Jesus, Be The Centre
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rNOLwKGgGWQ>

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

Word as Light. So much of the marathon Psalm 119 is about the word of God in one form or another, and verses 105-112 are indicative of the whole. Of course when the Psalms were being written and first used the Bible (even the Old Testament) as we know it had not been completed. Yet many stories, oracles and writings had been collected, especially the early works, the five books of Moses containing the Law. The

Law was and is important, but not in the way we perhaps understand the law today. For God's people the Law is the basis of their covenant relationship with their God. It is a living not a dead word, a guide to living a holy life. Thus the psalmist confesses, 'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.' For the lamp, the light, to be of any use it must be taken out and used, not hidden away behind blackout curtains. The word of God is only of any use when it is used. Sometimes it seems as if the psalmist has swallowed a thesaurus because alternative words describe the breadth and depth of how he understands God's word and his committed relationship with that word: lamp, light, laws, precepts, statutes, decrees—and there are others elsewhere in the psalm. We learn of the psalmist's suffering, his worship, the danger he is in, and the promises he has made; yet his heart is set on remaining faithful to God's word to the very end, despite the real temptations to stray, and that is his earnest prayer. It needs to be our earnest prayer too.

Word as Seed. When we come to the passage in Isaiah 55:10-13 we see that the imagery around God's word has changed. Here the word that comes from God's mouth is like a seed that is planted and germinates and grows into all that it was intended to be. The one seed produces many seeds, enough that some can be used for food and some can be planted to provide the next