

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

10 January 2021

Dear Friends,

I write this whilst we watch, aghast, on our TV screens, the violent irrational mob behaviour of the crowds in Washington, violating the home of American democracy, sporting the abhorrent symbols of white supremacy and slave ownership, shouting the abusive rhetoric most often heard from fascist extremists and terrorists, striking fear into those crossing their path. And now I have written that sentence I can hardly believe that I have done so. That the crowds were responding to the direct encouragement of the outgoing president is equally unbelievable. Seeing this from across the pond is shocking, as its waves circulate the globe in horror. I don't know about you, but these events, happening while we are at the start of a stricter lockdown, only increase the sense of helplessness. Yet what we can and need to do is pray for the incoming President and those who have the difficult task of rebuilding political trust and enforcing peace in the weeks ahead. Lord have mercy.

We are reminded again of the stark contrasts between right and wrong, good and evil. The powerful metaphorical language of rejecting the dark and living in the light is brought to life alongside the real events that we are witnessing. Some of us might remember the consequences of the rise of Nazi Germany, which the German Chancellor warned against this week. Others will remember numerous violent demonstrations in the years since. Violence never wins, there is always loss of life, and the cause is shown up for what it really is.

And the voice of God booms out into the darkness, 'Let there be light.' This is the voice of God spoken of by King David, 'The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord thunders over the mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is majestic.' From God's Word all things come to be, so that we may truly cry 'Glory!'. This is the time of year for new beginnings, doing things in new ways. We have just celebrated the Light of Christ which has been born into the world, Jesus who says of himself, 'I am the light of the world.' For our dark world our prayer continues to echo God: 'Let there be light'!

This second Sunday of the year also traditionally commemorates the Baptism of Jesus. It was after his baptism that Jesus' full ministry began. Confessing our sin to God through Jesus is an important start to rejecting the dark part of our lives and embracing his light. And being baptised is the next step, following the example and teaching of Jesus. Yet living fully in the Light of Christ is more than just being washed clean in water. It is about being immersed in the Word of God, speaking into our hearts daily, and being saturated in the Spirit of God, the life of Jesus living within. Living in the light is about living in and through Christ. We might have been hesitant making new year resolutions this year, but resolving to follow fully in the footsteps of Jesus is a resolution always worth making. In Jesus' baptism the dove and the voice, Spirit and Word, come together; for us they form the only solid basis for living life in all its fullness.

Zoom in the safest way for most people to meet at this time and will continue to be the main way that we will be able to meet for a little while yet, particularly now that we are in Tier 4. Our Zoom Sunday Service is at 10.30am today, and our Zoom Prayer Meeting is at 7pm on Monday. The Zoom links will be sent to those who have signed up to receive them. If you'd like us to send you the links, please let us know. If you are reading this sheet on your computer or device you can click on the the readings and songs. There is more information on our website at <https://rydebaptist.xyz>

BIBLE READINGS

[Genesis 1:1-5](#)

[Psalm 29:1-11](#)

[Mark 1:4-11](#)

[Philippians 4:1-9](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Ascribe to the Lord, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due to his name; worship the Lord in the splendour of his holiness. [Psalm 29:1-2]

SONGS

[Praise To The Lord The Almighty](#)

[Great Is Thy Faithfulness](#)

FOR REFLECTION

We are grateful to Ian Pratt who has written our Mini-Sermon Outline for this morning and has chosen our songs. For reflection, listen to Isaac Watts' hymn '[With Joy We Meditate The Grace](#)'. In the light of this you might find it helpful to revisit and add to your GRATEFUL and HOPEFUL lists which you started last week. How can this help us respond to recent world events?

PRAYER

'Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner. I confess my sins to you, especially those upon my conscience. I firmly believe that you died for me to bear away my sins. And now, according to your promise, I open my heart to you. Come in, Lord Jesus, and be my Saviour and Friend for ever.' [Anon]

Lord, we come to you this day with all sorts of conflicting thoughts on our minds. We are conscious of your love, expressed perfectly through your cross and resurrection. Yet we see around us all kinds of injustice, disease and sin. Lord, forgive us for any of this that is rooted within ourselves, and give us the resources to be able to counter any injustice, disease or other sin within our control. Pour out your Spirit to heal the causes of sin, and transform the lives of those suffering its worst effects.

Lord, we pray for our suffering world this day. The Covid-19 pandemic seems to be getting worse, and we are grateful for the vaccine which is on its way. There is political strife at home and abroad: so we pray for the United States of America, its new President and Vice-President and new Senators, as they begin their new office at a time of conflict, that there may be peace and reconciliation; and we pray for our own United Kingdom and its nations, and our relationships with Europe and the World at this time of crisis and stress, that there may be peace.

May the Peace of God be with us.

SONG

[He Will Hold Me Fast](#)

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

Introduction. As I write this the number of people worldwide who have died in the

current pandemic is above one million people. How does that compare with previous pandemics?

Antonine Plague: A.D. 165-180 Estimated over 5 million deaths.

The Black Death: 1346-1353 Estimate that half the Europe's population died in this pandemic.

Spanish Flu: 1918-1920 over 100 million deaths worldwide.

You may be wondering where I am going with this. Bear with me.

Exposition. Let me introduce to you Martin Rinkart, who lived through a time of plague. He was born in 1586 (died in 1649) and he was a German Lutheran clergyman and hymn writer. He is best known for the text to "Now thank we all our God" (Nun danket alle Gott), which was written about 1636. It was set to music by Johann Crüger about 1647, and translated into English in the 19th century by Catherine Winkworth.

He came to Eilenburg, Saxony at the beginning of the Thirty Years' War. This war was the longest and what many believe is still the most destructive war in European history if you can imagine that. However, at the time it was just "the war," the terrible, terrible war that people wondered would ever end.

Eilenburg is near Leipzig in what was the former East Germany. At that time the walled city of Eilenburg became the refuge for political and military fugitives, but the result was overcrowding, and deadly pestilence and famine. Great armies crossed the land, pillaging shops and farms, leaving ruin and desolation behind. Farming activities were so interrupted by the war that famine ensued

throughout Saxony. These armies overran it three times. Then the plague broke out. The Rinkart home was a refuge for the victims, even though he was often hard-pressed to provide for his own family. The other two ministers in town died, leaving Martin to care for the multitudes alone. All day he went from bed to bed, nursing the sick and comforting the dying. He conducted thousands of funerals, sometimes reading the funeral service over forty or fifty bodies at once. Among the eight thousand who perished in 1637 was his own wife. During the height of this severe plague Martin Rinkart conducted as many as 50 funerals in a day. He performed more than 4000 funerals in that year, including that of his wife.

What made the plague worse was that the people could not leave the city. The enemy army of the Swedish surrounded them in what is called a siege. The Swedish said they would starve the city out unless the men and women of Eilenburg gave them a huge sum of money. So, what do you think they could do?

Martin Rinkart was the hero of the city. All alone, he left the safety of the walls to negotiate with the enemy army, and he did so with grace, courage, and faith. He got the Swedish army to accept a sum of money that the city could pay, and soon the siege was lifted.

And yet it was sometime in the middle of this unspeakable devastation and personal loss that Martin Rinkart penned one of the most well-known and powerful Thanksgiving hymns you will find, "Now Thank We All Our God." But Martin Rinkart did not originally intend this to be a public hymn. So the story goes, he wrote the first two verses for his children to sing at home as part of their prayers before

meals and each night before bedtime — which gives these words a whole new meaning:

Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, in whom this world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way,
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in his grace, and guide us when perplexed;
And free us from all ills, in this world and the next!

This great hymn of communal thanksgiving began as a prayer written by a widowed, single father for his two motherless children to remind them (and perhaps himself) that no matter the circumstances, God was still with them, offering “countless gifts of love.” Accordingly, there was always reason to give thanks.

A year after the war ended in 1649, Martin himself died. But he left behind this remarkable hymn—one of my favourites, but one I have not sung or thought about for a while.

The book of Psalms is full of prayers of thanksgiving and praise. It is easy to be thankful and to praise God when things are going well. What about when things are difficult like today with the pandemic where we have been in various stages of lockdown and restriction of movement?

The prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 12 verse 4 exhorts the people of Israel to:

“Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done,
and proclaim that his name is exalted.”

Application. Today’s application is very simple. No matter what the circumstances God is still with us and is worthy of our utmost praise and thanksgiving.

SONG

Now Thank We All Our God

PRAYER

Creator God, thank you that there is nowhere I can go that is beyond your presence. In your presence, I am blessed beyond measure. You have said that you will never leave me or forsake me, you are always with me. May I live a life of thanksgiving in your presence. Hear my prayer and fill my heart and my mouth with praise to you for your good gifts. May your love be the passion in my heart. May your joy be my strength when times are hard. May your presence be my peace that overflows. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.

BLESSING

‘Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things... And the God of peace will be with you.’ [Philippians 4:8-9]

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, we with us all, now and always. Amen.

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