

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

31 January 2021

Dear Friends,

BMS World Mission have asked us to join with them in a Day of Prayer. You will have received a list of Prayer Points alongside your 7/52 and Sunday Service Sheet for today. BMS World Mission is the primary Baptist mission and development agency working in countries right around the world. It was founded in 1792 by shoe-maker and pastor William Carey, who had written a pamphlet with the short and pithy title 'An Enquiry into the Use of Means for the Conversion of the Heathens'. It was believed at the time that lots of the things spoken referred to in the Gospels no longer applied to the church, but Carey argued that since the promise of Jesus to be with his disciples to the end of the age was universal, it therefore follows that it is incumbent on disciples in each generation to 'go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them everything I have commanded you'. [Matthew 28:19-20]. He then set out a plan to achieve this. On 2 October 1792 a meeting was held in Northamptonshire which formed what became known as the Baptist Missionary Society, now shortened to BMS World Mission. You may already know that early in 1793 William Carey, who was also called to be the first Baptist missionary to India, spend a short time lodging in Ryde having been let down regarding his first choice of ship. A former minister of Ryde Baptist Church, Rev Walter Fancutt, wrote a booklet about this which will be added to our website in the next few of weeks.

Today there are number of ways that we can continue this mission ourselves. The 'Great Commission' of Matthew 28:16-20 applies to each of us personally in our daily lives, it applies to our church in the way we organise our mission and ministry, and it applies to the specific call that God gives people to serve him as ministers and missionaries, at home or elsewhere in the world. When God calls such people, he also issues a call to the rest of the church to support them financially, in prayer, and through encouragement and education about their work. We can give our support in each of these ways today. If you go to the BMS World Mission Website, <https://www.bmsworldmission.org>, you can read all about the places and people among whom they work, prayer topics, and importantly subscribe to [Engage](#), which will be sent to your address several times a year. BMS describe their mission this way: "The highest goal of all we do is to bring people to faith in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and an experience of the abundant life that only he can provide. One God, Seven Ministries, One Mission." The seven ministries are in the areas of Church, Development, Education, Health, Justice, Leadership and Relief.

It will soon be Lent. To encourage us in our Prayer during this lead up to Easter we will be running The Prayer Course, which lasts an hour on each of eight Thursdays from 11 February 1 April. This is an amazing opportunity to learn and to be encouraged together, so do look out for the details and please reply to the invitation to sign up for the weekly online sessions.

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. 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, including a growing archive, on our website at <https://rydebaptist.xyz>

BIBLE READINGS

[Psalm 111:1-10](#)

[Mark 1:21-28](#)

[1 Corinthians 8:1-13](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

'Praise the Lord. I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly. Great are the works of the Lord; they are pondered by all who delight in them. Glorious and majestic are his deeds, and his righteousness endures for ever.' [Psalm 111:1-3]

SONGS

[Shout To The Lord \(My Jesus, My Saviour\)](#)

[You Are Worthy Of My Praise](#)

FOR REFLECTION

Psalm 111:2 gives us a good suggestion for reflection today. One dictionary defines the verb 'to ponder' as 'to think carefully about something, especially for a noticeable length of time'! Ponder the great works of the Lord, including creation, redemption, forgiveness, salvation, etc. Let your pondering naturally turn into prayer.

PRAYER

Please use the BMS World Mission Day of Prayer list of Prayer Points for your prayers today.

You might then like to pray for the world, praying in ever decreasing circles before reaching your local community, friends, family, and eventually yourself.

'O Lord, the house of my soul is narrow; enlarge it, that you may enter in. It is ruinous, O repair it! It displeases your sight; I confess it, I know. But who shall cleanse it, to whom shall I cry but to you? Cleanse me from my secret faults, O Lord, and spare your servant from strange sins.' [Augustine, 354-430]

SONGS

[Refiners Fire \(Purify My Heart\)](#)

[Thank You For Saving Me](#)

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

Many groups have them, whether families, or social groups, even churches: those people who in some way or another are disruptive to the way that the group functions. Our reading from Mark 1:21-28 this morning possibly contains just such a person. I have been reading and studying Mark's Gospel, the shortest and earliest Gospel to be written, for the whole of my Christian and educational life. It was a set text for the O Level RE exam that I took in 1979; it was a compulsory module when I went off to College to study for my first degree in 1982; it has been part of my regular reading of the Gospels over the last fifty or so years. So it is fascinating that it is only recently that I have noticed something curious about this passage and the way that it has been translated in our modern Bibles that I hadn't seen before.

Who Is The Man? To be honest, we don't know very much about the man except that he had an unclean spirit. Most of us immediately jump to the conclusion that there was some evil intruder living within him, although the word demon is never used. Our conclusion would seem to be encouraged by the NIV which says 'he was possessed by an impure spirit'. The NRSV on the other hand refers to 'a man with an unclean spirit', a translation which is confirmed by the ESV. These latter two are literal translations from the Greek, whilst the NIV takes a more dynamic interpretive approach, doing some of the thinking for us. Yet when we read the translations side by side we are left asking all sorts of questions. The fact that this spirit can be driven out, further leads towards this conclusion however. Reading further into Mark's Gospel, in chapter 5:1-20, we find a much more elaborated account of Jesus driving out unclean spirits from a man who then decamp into a herd of Gerasene pigs – so we know we are on safe ground, even though the word 'demon' is not used. (The words 'demoniac' or 'demon-possessed' only appear in the later editorial headings and not in the original text.) So although traditionally we think in terms of the man being 'possessed' by a malevolent outsider, for good reason, there is also good reason to explore this much further.

What Is This Impure Spirit? A 'liberal' reader might conclude that there are no such things as demons or evil spirits; a 'conservative' approach might be to see supernatural beings and powers behind each of these episodes. To be clear, I am not suggesting that this cannot be or is not demonic - but neither am I encouraging us to jump to easy conclusions. From an early 21st century understanding of mental health, cognitive development and beha-

vioural science, compared to that of the early 1st century, we do need to take this question seriously. For those who like original languages, the Greek phrase in Mark 1:23 is ἄνθρωπος ἐν πνεύματι ἀκαθάρτῳ, literally 'man with spirit unclean/impure'. Everything else we know comes from the narrative: the man cries out, revealing that he knows who Jesus is; Jesus tells him to be quiet, and violently and noisily the unclean spirit comes out of the man.

What Does The Impure Spirit Say? It is worth exploring what it is that the man cried out. 'What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!' Clearly the impure spirit in the man has an agenda of its own, it is up to no good. Otherwise it would not be described as impure or unclean! At its most basic its agenda and motive can be seen as the exact opposite to that of Jesus. It sees Jesus as a threat. In this case, right at the very start of Jesus' public ministry of healing and teaching, this spirit represents all that is opposed to who Jesus is and what Jesus is going to be doing. It knows who Jesus is, and for this spirit that knowledge is its downfall, but it also cries what it knows out loud, in public, in the synagogue. Not only is the man disruptive of the peaceful order and practices of the synagogue, he is also potentially disruptive of the ministry of Jesus himself. It is too soon for this sort of public outing and opposition. We know elsewhere that Jesus is continually telling those he has healed to keep it quiet. (This feature in Mark about letting the cat out of the bag too soon is often referred to as the Messianic Secret.) Eventually such opposition will lead to his crucifixion, but now is too early, things have only just begun. Luke gives us a taste of what this early opposi-

tion looks like in the way he describes the start of Jesus' ministry in the synagogue at Nazareth, when he is thrown out of town before he heads to Galilee. [Luke 4:14-30]

Blessed Are The Poor In Spirit. It is in Matthew's Gospel that we see the sort of spirit that Jesus encourages right from the start. In the Beatitudes [Matthew 5:1-16] Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit. The same word, πνεύματι, is used. The poor spirit is a pure spirit. It is empty of selfishness and pride, of impure motives or greed. It seeks after righteousness and the ways of the living God. It lives in harmony with the community, seeking the values and the good of God's kingdom. It supports and encourages. It doesn't pursue its own course or agenda, however worthy it might appear, but forms good relationships with sisters and brothers in the church. It is humble, respectful, open, honest. It repents, and continues to nurture new ways of living and relating, throwing off old destructive sinful practices that destroy or divide.

The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly. The challenge for us is one of discernment, in ourselves and others. Because the impure still coexists with the pure, we can spend more time in our churches trying to sort out problems or issues between people, things that distract us or exhaust an enormous amount of physical, emotional or spiritual energy, than we spend on our core mission to proclaim the gospel and make disciples. Actively or passively aggressive spirits can so easily set a church off course or divert it from its true path. The message of Jesus to the man with the impure spirit at the start of his ministry is to 'be quiet' and to 'come out'. We find this uncomfortable because we want to

forgive and to reconcile. Yet without true repentance and transformation of spirit, old destructive patterns of behaviour and dysfunctional relationships can soon re-surface and cause anxiety and pain. The man with the impure spirit knows who Jesus is, is present in the synagogue (is a member of the worshipping community), even names him the Holy One of God – yet underneath he is something completely different altogether. Such an unregenerate spirit has no place in the mission of Jesus, but sorting it out is a noisy and painful affair. Yet it must be done if Jesus is to be glorified. 'What is this? A new teaching – and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.' And from here the good news spreads quickly!

SONG

Dear Lord And Father Of Mankind

PRAYER

'Into thy hands, O Lord, we commend ourselves this day. Let thy presence be with us to its close. Strengthen us to remember that in whatsoever good work we do we are serving thee. Give us a diligent and watchful spirit, that we may seek in all things to know thy will, and knowing it, gladly to perform it; to the honour of thy name.' [Anon]

BLESSING

'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.' [Psalm 111:10]

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 always. Amen.

<https://rydebaptist.xyz>