

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

9 May 2021

Dear Friends,

‘Sing to the LORD a new song’ – I love the way that Psalm 98 opens. In fact the more I study, reflect and pray around Psalm 98 the more it is becoming one of my favourite Psalms. Being a musical person, of course the middle of the Psalm, verses 4-6, resonates. Just as the sunrise heralds in the bright new day, so instruments (harp, trumpet, ram’s horn) accompany the human voice in a great symphony of praise. Then in the following verses the whole of creation (sea, land, everything in them, rivers, mountains) joins in the great hymn to its creation.

‘Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvellous things’ – there is a reason and a purpose for this particular song. It is because of what God has marvellously done by ‘his right hand and his holy arm’. There then follow a catalogue of what God has achieved, and from which those he loves and the whole of creation benefits. His salvation has been made known, his righteousness has been revealed. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness, not just to Israel but to ‘the nations’ and to ‘the ends of the earth’.

In the remembering of God’s love and faithfulness, we are reminded that the great covenant made with Abraham and his descendants was for the benefit of all, not just for Israel. God’s chosen people were to be a light to all nations. This covenant fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is Lord and Saviour, was not just for Jews but wholeheartedly for Gentiles

too. Not just for people but for the whole of creation, not just for one promised land but for the whole earth. Thus our responsibility for the restoration of our planet and not just a concern for lost, broken or hurting human lives. God’s love and faithfulness are freshly expressed by the beginning of each day. So when we awake we join in the global and heavenly chorus: ‘Sing to the LORD a new song’!

There is a caveat or condition found towards the end of the Psalm in verse 9 which one might think would mitigate against such ‘jubilant song... before the LORD, the King.’ That is because ‘he comes to judge the earth.’ Any talk of judgement might give rise thoughts of punishment. Some choose to think of God as angry, spiteful, vengeful, or vindictive. Yet this would be a partial and careless reading of the Bible, where God is slow to anger and swift to forgive. In verse 1 we are reminded that God’s work is salvation, in verse 9 that his judgement is righteous and equitable. God is just and fair.

The unrepentant and wilfully guilty might have cause to fear, but to those who come humbly and honestly in repentance God’s gift of healing and renewal awaits. Therefore, ‘The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.’ This is our calling and purpose too, to broadcast and proclaim that through Jesus Christ we have found God’s salvation and righteousness. This is the theme of all our worship and witness.

‘Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvellous things’!

Our Sunday worship service is just one small part of the spiritual life of Ryde Baptist Church. We are still not all able to safely gather in our building, so Zoom is the securest way for most people to meet at this time. It is not the same, but it fulfils an important purpose for the duration. Our Zoom Sunday Service is at 10.30am today. Services take a variety of forms and contents, and on the second Sunday of the month usually includes communion. On the fourth Sunday at 7pm we join with other Ryde churches. Our main weekly prayer meeting takes place on Monday evenings from 7pm, which is a really powerful and meaningful time in our life together. If you want to spend time praying with brothers and sisters in fellowship, this is the place to come. Regular Home Groups and other Courses - such as 'The Bible Course' that we are running at the moment - are very important for growing in discipleship and fellowship together. Of course, at the moment all these things take place using Zoom. 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>

NEXT SUNDAY: 16 MAY 2021

The annual Baptist Assembly will be taking place online from 13 to 16 May. On the Sunday at 10.30am there will be a service broadcast on YouTube, where the speaker will be Shane Claiborne. We will not have our own service next week but join in with our national Baptist family. There will also be no Sunday Service Sheet until the following week, 23 May, Pentecost Sunday. [Click here for Baptist Assembly Links.](#)

BIBLE READINGS

[Psalm 98:1-9](#)

[John 15:9-17](#)

[Acts 10:44-48](#)

[1 John 5:1-6](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done marvellous things;
his right hand and his holy arm
have worked salvation for him.
The LORD has made his salvation known
and revealed his righteousness to the
nations. [*Psalm 98:1-2*]

SONGS

[And Can It Be](#)

[Be Still For The Presence Of The Lord](#)

FOR REFLECTION

From Ascension Day on Thursday 13 May to Pentecost Sunday on 23 May Christians around the world are called to pray 'Thy Kingdom Come' based on the words of the Lord's Prayer. A ten day Prayer Journal has been produced and copies will be distributed to members around Ryde during the next few days (and further if there are some volunteer deliverers). [A digital version can be downloaded here.](#) Reflect upon how we can pray and live towards God's Kingdom being seen where we are.

PRAYERS

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the precious gift of this new day. For the opportunities to live for you and to serve you. For the freedom that forgiveness brings. For the marvellous things you have done. For the new song in our hearts. Fill our lungs with the breath of your Spirit that we may sing your new song, for ever.

For Ascension Day - 13 May 2021

In Acts 1:8-11 ESV we read:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Lord, your disciples were challenged on several occasions not to look in the wrong place. Help us not to keep on looking for the living among the dead. Help us not to keep on looking up into heaven, but out and around and about us to see the needs and the opportunities amongst which you call us to be your witnesses. And make us eager and open to receive the gift of your Holy Spirit, the giver of life and the enabler of your ministry and mission in and through our presence in this world. As the Paraclete comes to us, help us to stand alongside those who need your message of wholeness and healing in this world.

SONGS

[Power In The Blood](#)

[The King of Love My Shepherd Is](#)

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

When I left Bristol Baptist College in the summer of 1997 the then Principal of the College, Rev Dr Brian Haymes, followed the long tradition of passing on a valedictory Bible passage to graduating students.

The verse handed to me came from our reading from John’s Gospel this morning, John 15:6, ‘You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last’. It is a reassuring verse, if not also a little daunting, because it reminds us that before ever we decided to follow Jesus, or made a decision for Christ, we were already chosen by him.

There are lots of things we could focus on in today’s Gospel passage. It begins with a statement of God’s love for his Son Jesus and ends with a command to love each other. These brackets surround teaching about the depth, breadth and nature of the love of God through Jesus: love that endures, the love of deep friendship, sacrificial love that lays down its all.

As The Father Loved Me.

There is a lot in this seemingly simple simile, as Jesus compares his love to the love the Father has for him. The Father-Son relationship here is an intimate one, an extremely close one. Jesus shares the identity of God, not just as in sharing a common DNA. In the previous chapter Jesus says that he and the Father are one, and that anyone who sees him sees the Father. [*John 14:9-14*] The Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. We know that Jesus is God, and that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Yet as the Word of God is born in human flesh a distinction is made. At his baptism the Father declares, ‘This is my Son, who I love; with him I am well pleased.’ [*Matthew 3.17*] At his transfiguration this is amplified to ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!’ [*Matthew 17:5*] The Father loves the Son, and it is already also clear that this love will be sacrificial, as the Son obeys the Father’s commands.

So Have I Loved You.

The greatest evidence of Jesus' love for his disciples, whom he calls friends in contrast to the normal master-servant relationship between a first century rabbi and his followers, is the sacrifice that obedience to the Father involves. This is still in the future in this passage, yet is foreshadowed in that 'Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends.' There will be sorrow, loss and grief to come, yet the Son remains in the Father's love, and calls his friends to remain in his love. The friends of Jesus are those who hear his call and follow, who hear his commands and obey them. Jesus died on a cross for his friends, and his friends are called to follow along the same path. We cannot over-estimate what Jesus has done for us, though sadly we can often underestimate it by the ways that we respond.

Remain In My Love.

The wider context of John 15:9-17 is Jesus' teaching about the vine, and the need for the branches to be fruitful. In terms of the relationship between Jesus and his disciples the unfruitful branches that are cut off and thrown into the fire are entirely responsible for their own fate. As we have seen the love of God, the love of Jesus is relational and communal. God is Father, Son and Spirit, and the call for disciples to love one another is in direct connection with that love. When a branch isolates itself or falls away, or will have nothing to do with the other branches, it is no longer obedient, no longer fruitful, it no longer remains in the love of Christ, which is for individual branches only in as far as it is for the whole vine. Disciples are called to demonstrate their love of Christ by giving up their love of self in deference to their love of and remaining with each other.

Chosen To Bear Fruit.

When I was given that valedictory verse all those years ago I could never have imagined what the impact would be. I don't think I have ever deliberately set out each day thinking, 'I'm going to be fruitful today'. I think that would be debilitating, and where would one even begin? Yet looking back there has been fruitfulness in all sorts of ways. I know many of you can do the same. The secret of fruitfulness is not by planning to be fruitful but to be willing to be fruitful, and to do the two simple things in this passage: to follow the commands of Jesus and to remain in his love and the community of his love. This really isn't complicated. The vine is an amazing image of the church, which can only be fruitful in as much as the branches are connected and the love is flowing. This is more than about individuals, although how can we expect to be fruitful and fulfilled if we disconnect and fail to love one another. This is the ultimate command of Jesus here: love each other!

PRAYER

Lord, please help us to love each other.

SONG

[Blessed Assurance](#)

BLESSING

He has remembered his love
and his faithfulness to Israel;
all the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God. [*Psalms* 98:3]

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>