

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

30 May 2021 - Trinity Sunday

Dear Friends,

There are times when I look back at past experiences of church life, and the older I get the bigger the collection of anecdotes becomes. I can clearly remember in the 1970s and 1980s when older church members would laugh mockingly at those other churches that were 'happy clappy' or other Christians who were 'born again' as if they were a separate species. Sadly I still hear these phrases used negatively today, and it doesn't surprise me in the slightest that the church as a whole has suffered much decline in recent decades. Churches I have known have tragically closed precisely because they were unwilling to embrace the new life of the Spirit and to be born again in the way that Jesus describes.

It took me a long time to realise that there is only one kind of Christian, and it was then that I came to my own personal faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour and was born again. 'Born again', I discovered, is a basic definition of what a Christian is. One of the foundational Gospel passages that makes this very clear is in John 3:1-17 when Jesus tells Nicodemus the unequivocal truth that 'no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.' I used to get quite irritable and cross with Nicodemus because his objection to Jesus using the phrase 'born again' sounds so silly. Of course you can't just reenter your mother's womb and come out a second time. Of course Jesus is referring to something much more profound and essential.

I guess, therefore, that I still carry around some frustration with those people who

appear to dismiss the important things that are necessary for Christian faith, who find it difficult to accept the people who Jesus wants to welcome, who keep themselves away from and are critical of the vibrant and dynamic life that comes from being born again in the Holy Spirit.

Jesus' reply to Nicodemus still holds true today. 'I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.' Our human birth is important, our humanity as people created in the image of God is affirmed, but that is only one half of the equation. Unless we have a real encounter with Jesus where his Spirit joins with our spirit we remain human beings rather than citizens of the kingdom of God. Further we are reminded that baptism, symbolising death and rebirth, is not enough on its own; its companion is total immersion in the Holy Spirit that brings new life.

'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.'

Whether these are the words of Jesus [ESV] or John the Gospel writer [NIV] it still remains that Jesus came to bring new life, in all its fullness. That is why he repeated several times to Nicodemus that 'You must be born again.' If Jesus did not come to bring condemnation but to bring salvation, that is our message too – after, that is, we have ourselves been born again.

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>

BIBLE READINGS

[Psalm 29:1-11](#)

[John 3:1-17](#)

[Colossians 3:1-17](#)

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

[Holy Holy Holy Lord God Almighty](#)

[All Who Are Thirsty](#)

PRAYERS

I bind unto myself today
the strong name of the Trinity—
by invocation of the same,
the Three in One and One in Three...

I bind unto myself today
the strong name of the Trinity!
[attributed to St Patrick]

Living Love,
beginning and end,
giver of food and drink,
clothing and warmth,
love and hope:
life in all its goodness —
We praise and adore you.

Jesus, Wisdom and Word;
lover of outcasts,
friend of the poor;
one of us yet one with God;
crucified and risen:
life in the midst of death —
We praise and adore you.

Holy Spirit, storm and breath of love;
bridge-builder, eye-opener,
waker of the oppressed,
unseen and unexpected,
untameable energy of life —
We praise and adore you.

Holy Trinity, forever one,
whose nature is community;
source of all sharing,
in whom we love, and meet,
and know our neighbour:
life in all its fullness,
making all things new:
We praise and adore you.

[Brian Wren]

SONGS

What A Friend We Have In Jesus

10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

We are grateful to Ian Pratt for preparing and presenting our sermon for today.

Introduction

When I was a teenager, I was fascinated by a book called “Stranger than Science” by Frank Edwards. Some of you may remember it. The dust jacket said something like this. Readers will be baffled by this collection of astounding true stories of strange events, weird happenings, and unusual discoveries that science cannot explain.

In 2021 we like to feel that we can explain everything by science but there are still some things which are stranger than science. I want us to look this morning at one such thing in nature.

Exposition

Some of you will know that I have a great love of the natural world and I have great pleasure taking photos of plants, birds, animals, butterflies, dragonflies etc.

Sir David Attenborough through his TV programmes over the years has drawn our attention to the beauty of the natural world, and to its fragility. More than one million species are now at **risk of extinction**, and over a million species of animal and plant life are now **threatened** with dying out – more than ever before in human history, according to the International Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).

Here are some shocking facts to consider:

1. More than one million species are now at risk of extinction

2. Wildlife population sizes dropped by two thirds since 1970

3. Tropical sub-regions of Americas showing biggest declines

4. Species dying off more frequently than ever before

5. Freshwater species declining faster than anything else

6. Swathes of tropical forest lost to agriculture

7. Nearly 40% of plants at risk of extinction

8. Industrial agriculture driving decline of insects

9. Bird species also seeing populations threat

As Christians we need to take very seriously the threat of global warming

This morning, I would like us to look at one animal which is stranger than science, and which has a profound lesson to teach us. (Thanks to Kirsten Holmberg from my daily readings of Our Daily Bread.)

You will be pleased to know that this creature is categorised as least concern due to its large geographic distribution.

In our reading Paul exhorts us as follows: Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. Colossians 3:2

I will be amazed if anyone has ever heard of this creature: *Histioteuthis heteropsis*.

Histioteuthis is a genus of squid and the only member of the *Histioteuthidae* family. It goes by the common name cock-eyed squid, because in all species the right eye is normal-sized, round, blue and sunken, whereas the left eye is at least twice the diameter of the right eye, tubular, yellow-green, and it faces upward, and bulges out of the head.

In 2017, researchers at Duke University established that *Histioteuthis* uses its larger eye to see ambient sunlight, and its smaller eye to detect bioluminescence from prey animals.

Animals use vision for three primary reasons—to find food, to avoid being eaten, and to find a mate. The cockeyed squid lives in the ocean’s “twilight zone” (200-1000 metres below the ocean surface) where sunlight barely filters through the deep waters. The squid’s nickname is a reference to its two extremely different eyes: the left eye develops over time to become considerably larger than the right—almost twice as big. Scientists studying the mollusc have deduced that the squid uses its right eye, the smaller one, to look down into the darker depths. The larger, left eye, gazes upward, toward the sunlight.

The squid is an unlikely depiction of what it means to live in our present world, and also to live in the future certainty we await as people who “have been raised with Christ” (Colossians 3:1). In Paul’s letter to the Colossians, he insists we ought to “set [our] minds on things above” because our lives are “hidden with Christ in God” (verses 2–3).

As earth-dwellers awaiting our lives in heaven, we keep an eye trained on what is happening around us in our present reality. But just as the squid’s left eye develops over time into one that is larger and more sensitive to what is happening overhead, we too can grow in our awareness of the ways God works in the spiritual realm. We may not have yet fully grasped what it means to be alive in Jesus, but as we look “up,” our eyes will begin to see it more and more.

Application

How can we all develop our “upward” vision? How can we set our minds on heavenly things? That is the challenge for each of us as we continue living in a time of pandemic.

Loving God help us to set our minds and hearts on those things that are of You!

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 and worship 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.

SONG

[Let Everything That Has Breath](#)

BLESSING

The LORD sits enthroned over the flood;
the LORD is enthroned as King for ever.
the LORD gives strength to his people;
the LORD blesses his people with peace.

[*Psalm 29:10-11*]

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.

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