

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

13 June 2021

Dear Friends,

It is a real joy and privilege to be a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is even more special to be in good relationship with brother and sister disciples gathered together as the Church of Christ. One of the miracles of this last year is that so many of us have maintained close communion with one another despite the difficulties and restrictions. Technology has helped tremendously. The sudden and long-lasting changes will have given some the opportunity to rethink their commitments. Things are not what they were and will never ever be so again. The challenge is to pray and to look forward in anticipation to what new things God will do. There will be some resistance, as there always is when God is on the move. The temptation to hark back to the 'good old days' will be too much for some to resist; and bricks and mortar, and long-departed patterns and traditions, will seem like solutions to present challenges and concerns. This has never worked and will only cause pain. Others, like the church in Acts, will look forward to a fresh move of the Holy Spirit, remembering that the church is a dynamic living community of prayerful people, sensitive and responsive to the here and now, the call of Jesus to 'follow me' as he builds his church from living stones rather than kiln-baked blocks of clay.

Whether or not we were forced to by Covid-19, it is essential that at least once every generation a church reviews and renews its vision and purpose. It is fascinating looking back at the history of Ryde

Baptist Church, now in its fourth home, to see how we have responded to the times and to the call of God. A generation has passed since the tragic fire and redevelopment of our present George Street premises. The context and the mission has changed. The vision as set out at the millennium is no longer fit for purpose today.

Our Gospel reading from Mark 4:26-34 contains two familiar parables. Their familiarity can cause us to overlook the personal challenge they present for each one of us. In the first we are reminded that although God gives the growth we as disciples must be scattering the seed in the first place. This isn't someone else's job, it cannot be subcontracted. It's yours as much as it is mine, without any exception. In the second we are reminded that even the smallest of seeds can lead to the most tremendous growth. Whilst some of us might think our small contribution is nothing, God is using it even as we speak and will bless it in due course. If we've not been out sowing, in sync with the whole workforce, there will be no seed planted and no future encouragement to expect.

As clearly articulated at a recent church meeting, God is calling us to prayer and to seek him for our future. There is no other path available to us. We cannot go backwards. Last week's call to Unity, and this week's call to Holiness, are timely and essential ingredients that need to be part of our everyday church experience. Without these we will never discern the genuine voice of God above the cacophony of human opinion that has already begun.

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. Hopefully we'll be back in our building soon. Our Zoom Service is at 10.30am. Services take a variety of forms, and on the second Sunday of the month usually includes communion. Our 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 Prayer Course' and 'The Bible Course' that we have recently run - 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 are sent to those who have signed up to receive them. If you would 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 15](#)

[Mark 4:26-34](#)

[2 Peter 3:11-18](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

'This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil pro-

duces corn—first the stalk, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. As soon as the corn is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.' [*Mk 3:26ff*]

SONGS

[Holy Holy Holy Lord God Almighty](#)

[Holy And Anointed One](#)

PRAYER

Help me, my God, to be joyful always, to pray at all times, and be thankful in all circumstances. [*1 Thess 5:16-18 altd*]

Cleanse me, O God, by the bright fountain of your mercy, and water me with the dew of your abundant grace, that, being purified from my sins, I may grow up in good works, truly serving you in holiness and righteousness all the days of my life. [*Private Devotions, 1560 altd*]

O Lord God, destroy and root out whatever the adversary plants in me, that with my sins destroyed you may sow understanding and good work in my mouth and heart; so that in act and in truth I may serve only you and know how to fulfil the commandments of Christ and to seek yourself. Give me love, give me chastity, give me faith, give me all things which you know belong to the profit of my soul. O Lord, work good in me, and provide me with what you know that I need. [*Columbanus, c.550-615*]

God, stay with me; let no word cross my lips that is not your word, no thoughts enter my mind that are not your thoughts, no deed ever be done or entertained by me that is not your deed. [*Malcolm Muggeridge*]

May God himself, the God of peace, make us holy in every part; and keep us sound in spirit, soul, and body, without fault when

our Lord Jesus Christ comes. He who calls us is to be trusted: he will do it. For ecstasy of body, for exchange of mind, and for unity of the spirit in love, praise God. [Daphne Fraser]

SONGS

Be Still For The Presence Of The Lord

Holy Is The Lord

We are very grateful to Martin Light for preparing and presenting our sermon reflection for today. Martin has ably led us on many occasions over the years and we shall greatly miss him as he heads north.

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

Holiness

A worship leader has said we need more songs about holiness. At first glance this is surprising, as many of the songs we sing refer to a holy God. However, looking through my collection of Bible Study books I could find only one study (not a whole book) devoted to holiness, even though the Bible is full of references to holiness. So I hope these thoughts will be helpful as we worship by thought, word and in deed (Romans 12:1,2)

A Holy God. This phrase says something important about God. The Hebrew and Greek words for 'holy' means 'set apart'. Look at Exodus 3 when Moses encounters a burning bush whose flame never goes out. A recurrent theme is here: the 'otherness' or transcendence of God. This is in contrast to false gods. The Philistines worshipped gods of creation (Baal, Asherah) rather than the Creator, for example, like many others down the centuries.

A Holy People. Alongside this distancing of God we have the astonishing revelation that He wants a relationship with us. He

appeared to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses and Samuel – see Psalm 99:6: 'They called on the Lord and He answered them'.

Unlike other 'gods' He demands moral perfection, high ethical standards. When He appeared to the leaders of Israel and gave his instructions, in Exodus 24:3 the people of Israel said 'Everything the Lord has said we will do.'

We see the picture of God as Holy, expecting us to be like Him, reflected in the New Testament. Matthew 5:48 'You must be perfect just as your heavenly Father is perfect'. In John 17: 11 Jesus refers to his Father as Holy. In Acts 4:30 the first disciples refer to the 'holy servant Jesus'. And in verse 25 they referred to the Holy Spirit speaking through Psalm 2.

The song that we know that best reflects the holiness of God is perhaps 'Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One, is here'. What should we be thinking about when singing this song? The well-known hymn 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty' gives us a pattern for our thinking about the holiness of God.

The Bible does not just speak of the holiness of God, but also of holy places (the burning bush) holy objects (the Ark of the Covenant) holy seasons (the Sabbath, Genesis 2:3) and persons (the Levites, priests). These are people and places set apart for God. As God reveals more of himself, so the call comes to go beyond ceremonial holiness (outside) to the sort of holy living that transforms us inside. The Prophets have a lot to say about this, and Jesus makes it clear that this is his view of holiness in the Sermon on the Mount (eg Matthew 5: 33-38). Paul develops the view of the Spirit transforming us in Romans 8:4, sometimes called sanctification.

Why do we need the Spirit? As Richard Foster writes, 'willpower will never succeed in dealing with the deeply ingrained habits of sin'. We must learn to rely on the grace of God and the power of the Spirit in our lives.

Paul reminds us, perhaps from personal experience, that although we are freed from slavery to sin, we still struggle with sin Romans (8:26,27). Some of us would like to think of the Christian life as a time when we rest in the Lord. But there are other times when our Christian life is a struggle, even a battle. We need help, and this is what the Holy Spirit can provide. 'If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live' (8:13)

A Holy Hope. We have a hope for the future. God will not leave the world as we know it for ever. 2 Peter 3:11 says 'You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.' Peter is recorded speaking about God restoring 'everything' in Acts 3:21.

But in the meantime there have been divisions among Christians on how far we should struggle to achieve holiness – fight the good fight – and how far this is a blessing God gives us as we rest in him.

'Stayed upon Jehovah,
hearts are fully blest;
Finding as he promised
Perfect peace and rest.' (F R Havergal)

Further, can we achieve perfection as John Wesley suggested? Should we be looking for an instant experience or a growth in holiness over time? Most of us experience times when we are distinctly less than holy, but also believe the Holy Spirit draws us closer to Christ as we put our trust in Him day by day. As we do this so

we become more like Him. But why do we need spiritual armour if there is no need to fight the good fight?

Conclusion 1. It is indeed a good and biblical challenge to recognise the holiness of God, avoiding over familiarity. We may indeed need more songs on this theme.

2. It is also important to remember the words of Leviticus 19:2 'Be Holy, for I the Lord God am Holy'.

3. We may struggle at times, but we have the promise of help. R.H Benson says 'No (one) can walk three paces along the road to perfection unless Jesus Christ walks beside (them)'.

Suggested exercise for the coming week: think of Christian biographies, perhaps re-read one. How have the saints (Christians) practised holiness, and what sort of struggles did they have?

SONG

To God Be The Glory

BLESSING

'What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such branches that the birds can perch in its shade.' [Mark 3:30-32]

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy.' [1 Peter 1:15-16]

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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