

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

20 June 2021

Dear Friends,

Having sat in a boat with others on the Sea of Galilee, on a couple of occasions, it is easy to imagine those scenes in the Gospels that are set in this location. However, each time I was there the water was calm. Nothing to do with me, of course, and nothing to do with Jesus that a furious squall had blown up while he was resting in the stern of the boat featured in this morning's Gospel reading! Such heavy storms are a regular feature of the lake, suddenly appearing as if from nowhere. Experienced Galilee fishermen and navigators of the lake would know what to expect and how to respond. Strange then that on this occasion, as the waves broke over the boat so that it was nearly swamped, the disciples turned on Jesus. 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?' they asked as they woke him from sleep. He was no doubt exhausted from all that he'd been doing, so how was he supposed to know what was going on? Furthermore, it was their boat, they were the ones with experience, they were the crew. Jesus, the tekton from Nazareth, was the passenger.

There is something in this story that is reminiscent of Jonah and his aborted trip by sea to avoid going to Nineveh. On that occasion the crew looked for a reason for the storm that might cause them to drown, and Jonah recognising his sin offered to be thrown overboard. When disaster strikes, or looks as if it might be on the horizon, there is an instinct that causes us to look for something or someone to blame, to make responsible. Yet they were the crew

hired to take the ship safely to its destination. Jonah was just a passenger, one who was running from God. And storms happen, often, whether on a lake or on the open sea. So where should the buck stop?

I once heard the late great Alan Kreider speaking about Christian faith as being 're-reflexed'. What that means is, being transformed by the Holy Spirit, Christians respond very differently from the ways of the world. It is similar to when the Bible teaches us that you can tell whether someone is really a Christian by their love, their works, their fruit. [*Matthew 7:15-20; John 13:34-35; James 2:14-26; etc.*]

When a storm hits there are a couple worldly ways in which we can respond. There is the 'don't panic Mr Mainwaring' reflex which usually leads to blind panic or to accepting knee-jerk solutions. There is also the cool collected apparently knowledgeable advice on the practices and procedures that should be in place and that someone else ought to be carrying out. Both are understandable but fall very far short of the re-flexing or transformation that Christian faith expects—no, demands. At least Jonah had the good sense to pray! When circumstances feel like a sudden squall has hit, and the effects of the last eighteen months do feel much like that, our first response ought to be to trust, and to pray, and to have faith, and to consider what part we can play, what we can do. Jesus doesn't just rebuke the wind and the waves. He also rebuked his disciples: 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?' What might Jesus say to us today?

The countdown has begun and soon we will be able to worship in person again after eighteen months online. Just a little while longer on Zoom though, at 10.30am on Sunday mornings. The Sunday worship service is just one small part of the spiritual life of Ryde Baptist Church. 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. In normal times there are regular Home Groups and other helpful courses - such as 'The Prayer Course' and 'The Bible Course' that we have been running online during the Covid restrictions - and these are very important for growing in discipleship and fellowship together. The weekly 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 133](#)

[1 Samuel 17:\(1a,4-11,19-23\)32-49](#)

[Mark 4:35-41](#)

[2 Corinthians 6:1-13](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life for evermore. [*Psalm 133*]

SONGS

[Great In Power](#)

[Jesus Be The Centre](#)

PRAYERS

Lord, whatever this day may bring,
Thy name be praised.

[*Dietrich Bonhoeffer, written while awaiting execution in a Nazi prison*]

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. Amen.

[*The Daily Office*]

Give us, our Father, a sense of your presence as we gather now for worship.

Grant us gratitude as we remember your goodness, penitence as we remember our sins, and joy as we remember your love; and enable us to life up our hearts in humble prayer and fervent praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[*Frank Colquhoun*]

For a clearer vision of the work you have set before us and for a better understanding of your gospel, *Lord, direct us.*

For a deeper commitment in your service and a greater love for all your children, *Lord, direct us.*

For a fresh understanding of the task before us and for a sense of urgency in our proclamation, *Lord, direct us.*

For a greater respect and acceptance among Christians of different traditions and for a common goal in evangelism, *Lord direct us.* [*Church of Indian Ocean*]

Lord, help us to use honestly and well this day all the talents which you have given us, that the gain may not be ours only, but yours, and your kingdom's; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

[*Daily Prayer*]

We remember, O Lord, those who suffer from any kind of discrimination; your children, and our brothers and sisters, who are humiliated and oppressed; we pray for those who are denied fundamental human rights, for those who are imprisoned, and especially those who are tortured. Our thoughts rest a few moments with them... and we pray that your love may sustain them always. [Anon]

SONGS

Breathe On Me Breath Of God

Battle Belongs

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

Our readings from 1 Samuel and Mark 4 this morning are, or at least should be, very familiar to most of us. Many people will have heard these stories from early childhood, although sadly very few people in general society will have actually read them from the Bible itself. There is a tendency to use cut down versions from Children's Bibles which are often selective in what they present; this might be appropriate for very young children but is unhelpful as children get older. It might be a controversial view, so here goes, but this is something that other religious traditions would never do; even in Judaism quite small children are exposed to the full Tanakh (Hebrew Bible) in family and community setting from a very early age. To do otherwise might rightly be considered disrespectful to God, to Scripture and to the individual. Thankfully this is unnecessary given the number of excellent full Bible translations geared at children and young people, including the pioneering Good News Bible which was deliberately translated to be as accessible as possible and with a limited vocabulary.

We have already considered Mark 4's account of Jesus Calming the Storm. This well serves to introduce a theme running through the readings that whenever God's work is being done, there will always be battles to be fought and won against the forces that will resist it. A ferocious sea storm might appear to be the enemy, conjuring up primordial images of a powerful and consuming deep. Yet the real problem was the disciples failing to fully grasp who Jesus is. They are right to ask, 'Who is this?' Yet they should already know the answer. The factors working against them fulfilling the purposes of God at this point were their fear and their lack of faith, real factors that we have to grapple with too. I wonder if our Children's Bible fully realises the full impact of that challenge and the response that Jesus requires.

The account of David and Goliath has got to be among the best known of the Old Testament tales. Yet again my earliest memories of the Children's Bible version misses out many of the best details. I guess that Sunday School teachers in the 1960s were somewhat squeamish and preferred not to depict the full graphic horror and violence of the story nor have to explain the nature of circumcision to young ears, ironically something celebrated as the *brit milah* or *bris* ceremony at eight days old and worn as a badge of pride by young boys in its original Jewish context. Yet where is the true battle going on in the story? Between the Israelites and the Philistines? Partly yes. Between the young man David and the giant Goliath? Again, only partly yes. In fact the biggest battle going on in the story is the struggle for obedience between God and his people. The Israelites had begged God for their sort of king, and Saul ended up being anointed by Samuel to public ac-

claim. Yet David was God's choice of king, anointed by Samuel on God's instruction. The biggest battle was within the family of God over choosing worldly ways, demonstrated by Saul's actions that would eventually lead to his destruction, over God's way, shown by the obedience of David to the call of God. We can seek authority using our own influence, following our own dreams and plans, or we can submit to God and follow where he leads us together as his family working in unity.

In the history of the Church perhaps nobody embodies the opposition faced by disciples of Jesus better than Paul, who started off by being one of the biggest persecutors of the young Christian church. This is well documented in the Acts of the Apostles, yet there is also plenty of evidence in Paul's letters. The 'troubles, hardships and distresses' he and his companions suffered were horrendous. [2 *Corinthians 6:1-13*] Yet however hard the physical deprivations and tortures were, they were exacerbated by the spiritual and psychological anguish caused by his own people, God's people behaving badly, not telling the truth and regarding him as an impostor. Throughout his Corinthian correspondence Paul is honest about their failings which have affected him greatly, but mostly damaged the witness of the gospel of Christ, yet doing so in genuine affection and love. [v11] However Paul recognises that in the end this is not a worldly battle but a spiritual one. If things go wrong it is because people have given in to the devil's schemes. Hence Paul's passionate appeal to put on the full armour of God for when evil arrives.

Tom Wright describes Paul as standing in the line of 'servant-messengers of God, battered yet still going forwards.' When

such battering comes, it is never from God but from those who have failed to embrace and live, as Paul, 'in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love.' [v6] Submission to God is not a difficult thing to do, but we have to stop thinking and doing things our way and in our own strength.

SONG

[Build Your Kingdom Here](#)

BLESSING

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armour of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled round your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. [*Ephesians 6:10-18*]

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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