

# RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

## 27 June 2021

Dear Friends,

As we approach the end of another month we are happily reminded that there is only one more month to go before we will slowly begin meeting again in our building on a Sunday. Yet it is probably worth repeating what we have been saying over and over again during recent months that, although we have missed meeting in and using our building for all sorts of reasons, the church is absolutely not the building but the body of people united by the Spirit in the person of Jesus Christ. This has to be clearly stated again because there are those who still seem to think that the building is the most important thing about the mission and ministry of the church, rather than the active gathered community of Christian believers – disciples seeking to work out their faith and calling where they have been placed by God.

One of the great privileges of being a minister is the many varied approaches for conversation, so it has become very clear that some have misapplied these words to suggest that we are proposing selling up our building on George Street to realise its considerable financial assets. This could not be further from the truth, although it is possible and should not be dismissed if this is what God is calling us to do. Firstly, though, it is essential to call upon the Lord in prayer to seek what his agenda for us actually is. We are very grateful for the many prayerful and positive, considered responses in recent days, and the practical ways that have already emerged to address the challenges that we face.

Among these communications has been a challenge to look at Proverbs 22:28. In the NIV(2011) it reads 'Do not move an ancient boundary stone set up by your ancestors', and in the ESV 'Do not move the ancient landmark that your fathers have set'. If this truly is a prophetic word, over which we should pray and meditate carefully together, then we must take this very seriously. In its setting in Proverbs this is a powerful saying, but what does it mean for us in our context today?

When Ryde is approached from the sea the spire on our building is certainly a landmark, and once on land our imposing building is indeed a means of orientating and giving direction around the centre of the town. A boundary stone is a particular kind of landmark though, and marks the division or threshold between two districts, areas, or kingdoms. Appropriately ours is a building which was dedicated to the worship and service of the living God, originally named Christ Church. Primarily, then, what goes inside should be distinct from what goes on outside. We are not a community centre or a place that is used primarily by the community, but a church community that uses its building to serve the kingdom of God in the community. This is and should make all the difference in the world, for the sake of Christ.

So here are two questions for our prayers this week: How can we ensure that those who enter our building have a better experience of God? How can we each, as members of our church family, better signpost people to Jesus and his kingdom?

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 130](#)

[2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27](#)

[Mark 5:21-43](#)

[2 Corinthians 8:7-15](#)

## **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;

Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive  
to my cry for mercy.

If you, LORD, help a record of sins,  
Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness,  
so that we can, with reverence, serve  
you. [*Psalm 130:1-4*]

## **SONGS**

[Give Thanks With A Grateful Heart  
Faithful One](#)

## **PRAYERS**

In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. [*Philippians 4:6-7*]

O Father, give us the humility which

Realises its ignorance,

Admits its mistakes,

Recognises its need,

Welcomes advice,

Accepts rebuke.

Help us always

To praise rather than to criticise,

To sympathise rather than to condemn,

To encourage rather than to discourage,

To build up rather than to destroy,

And to think of people at their best  
rather than at their worst.

[*William Barclay, altd*]

Kindle, O Lord, in our hearts, we pray,  
the flame of that love which never  
ceases, that it may burn in us and give  
light to others.

May we shine for ever in your temple,  
set on fire with that eternal light of yours  
which puts to flight the darkness of this  
world; in the name of Jesus Christ your  
Son our Lord. Amen. [*Source unknown*]

## **SONGS**

[He Will Hold Me Fast](#)

[Christ Is Enough](#)

## **MINI-SERMON OUTLINE**

There are so many phrases in common use that come from the Bible. One of the most striking ones is found in this morning's reading from 2 Samuel 2:17-27. In his stirring lament in honour of father and son, Saul and Jonathan, David uses this phrase

three times, twice identically and once in modified form: 'How the mighty have fallen!' (vs 19, 25 & 27).

### **'How the mighty have fallen!'**

I can't remember when I first heard that saying. It probably wasn't from the Bible. It was most likely in response to the falling of some politician or another (Nixon or Thatcher spring to mind for some reason). Yet in the original context of this sad grief infused poem it demonstrates its full power. As both a regretful or a triumphant victor's cry it cannot be bettered.

Last week we reflected on the battle that was going on, not so much between David and Goliath but between God and the obedience and affection of his people. Saul was the people's king, yet God had chosen David. The relationship between Saul and David was toxic, which could not be said about David's close relationship with Saul's eldest son Jonathan. As Saul's life reaches its conclusion he would expect to be succeeded by Jonathan. Yet both Saul and Jonathan now lie dead.

### **'How the mighty have fallen in battle!'**

Despite his troubled relationship with Saul, David is respectful as he calls upon the Daughters of Israel to weep for Saul. His most moving sentiments, though, are reserved for Jonathan: 'I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of a woman.' The nature of this relationship has been subject to much speculation and innuendo over the years, but it was certainly strong and mutually beneficial. There would be further family skirmishes before David became king, but with Saul and Jonathan's demise he is on that path.

### **'How the mighty have fallen!'**

The kingdom of God and the kingdom(s) of this world are constantly in conflict with one another. Their values and their priorities are so different. As Mark's Gospel unfolds we are treated to a number of stories that describe what the kingdom of God is like, followed by a series of examples of Jesus bringing to life God's kingdom in powerful signs or miracles over nature, evil spirits, illness, and over life and death.

Jairus pleads with Jesus on behalf of his daughter who is dying, and is reported to have died before Jesus can get to her. Meanwhile an anonymous woman with a debilitating and costly affliction approaches Jesus to touch his cloak from behind. [Mark 5:21-43] These people are helpless and hopeless by themselves, but humbly approach the one they know and have seen for themselves can help them.

### **'How the mighty have fallen!'**

As a father, Jairus would have done or given anything to protect his daughter. He had reached the end of his human ability. A daughter looks up to her father as her saviour, but he cannot help her now. Human power and strength have been exhausted, the boundary between life and death is God's space – he alone can save.

A woman has suffered over a decade of torture from her painful ailment, made worse through poverty as she has spent everything on quacks or well-meaning but limited medical science. We praise God for two thousand years of progress in medicine, but when it comes to a battle between God and science, not that there needs to be conflict, God wins every time!

### **'How the mighty have fallen!'**

We mustn't let David off the hook here. The first in the line of God's kings, the father of a dynasty in whose line the Sa-

viour of the World is born. He had his failings, many of them. He had to learn that any power, authority, influence he had was given to him by God and not to be taken or grabbed on a whim. As we read his story we see how he is humbled by God, time and time again. He has to learn the hard way and so do we.

One of the worst songs, or the best confessions, depending on your perspective, is the song My Way. Can you imagine standing before God on the day of judgement singing 'I did it my way'? And yet that is perfectly conceivable. We have our hopes and dreams, which may proceed as planned or life may throw us off course from time to time, but we pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and start all over again. But wouldn't it be better for the chorus at the end of our lives to contain the words, 'I followed His way'?!

### **'How the mighty have fallen!**

The reason for humility, the power of confession, the hope and the life that we have in the crucified saviour all demonstrate the human truth that indeed, the mighty have fallen. But that is not the end of the story. Out of his lament for the passing of his former life, and his tempestuous relationships with Saul and Jonathan, comes a new reign. From the battle, David arises.

At the cross the cutting attack, 'If you are the Son of God... save yourself', rings out for all to hear. For those who have taken Jesus to this place, their words mock the pathetic scene – for them the words 'How the mighty have fallen' drop sarcastically to the ground. Yet they could not be more wrong, in both their intent and their conclusion. Unless the mighty fall, all is lost.

### **'How the mighty have fallen!'**

For from the fallen, a new reign rises. The

cross becomes freedom and liberty. The tomb becomes a birthing room. 'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.' [John 12:24] Unless our hopes, and plans, and dreams, and egos, and sense of self-determination, and control over own destiny and that of others, unless all this dies – then it will still ultimately lead to death. But if it dies...

At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow. That is both the plan and the inevitability. To lay down our lives before the one who laid down his life for us. Without death there is no resurrection. Without a full-stop to our wilfulness and waywardness there is no life in all its fullness. If the mighty don't fall on their knees, they will nevertheless fall; but if they fall willingly in humble submission, they shall surely rise.

### **'How the mighty have fallen!'**

## **SONG**

Be Thou My Vision

## **BLESSING**

Israel, put your hope in the LORD,  
for with the LORD is unfailing love  
and with him is full redemption.  
He himself will redeem Israel  
from all their sins. [Psalm 130:7-8]

Be, Lord, within me to strengthen me,  
without me to preserve, over me to shelter,  
beneath to support, before me to direct,  
behind me to bring back, round about  
me to fortify. [Lancelot Andrewes]

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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