

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

4 July 2021

Dear Friends,

This last week has been really eventful and significant. Of course in the middle of the week we reached the mid point of the year, reminding me that time seems to move really quickly these days. Most sobering was the realisation that at the beginning of the week I reached the twenty fourth anniversary of my ordination to Baptist ministry. Where that time has gone, I do not know. A quick calculation estimates that this represents some fifteen hundred sermons preached, over a thousand prayer meetings and Bible studies, and countless deacons' and church members' meetings. Of course these are only added to the decades during which I was serving God in my local church before entering ordained ministry. I've really lost count of the hundreds of books I have read, and the hundreds of hours attending training courses, conferences, refresher events, and professional and personal development sessions. These all continue to be part of ministry life today.

There have also been many changes in what is expected of ministers over the last twenty four years. Charity and a whole raft of other legislation has meant that ministry is no longer as straightforward as many of us remember back in the good old days of the twentieth century. Back in the mid-century the routine of a minister could be summed up as mornings in the study, afternoons doing some visiting, and a few evenings at meetings as well as leading the weekly church prayer and Bible study, and two full services on a Sunday.

There is no way that a pattern like this would be sustainable in the twenty-first century. Many of the essential additional tasks of oversight and trusteeship would never get done. Life is necessarily far more complicated. Also, that pattern sadly accompanied a time of unprecedented decline in the church after the second world war. Since then there has been a recognition that many of the tasks that were once regarded as the minister's sole responsibility, such as pastoral care, outreach, and evangelism, are actually the responsibility of the whole church. There has also rightly been far more emphasis on Paul's insight found in places such as Ephesians 4.12 that the work of the minister is to encourage and equip the whole church to be using their gifts to serve the ministry of God.

It can be disheartening when some church members don't take their full part, or put effort into following their own agendas, rather than working willingly as part of the team that Jesus has called together to build his church. Over the years I have experienced what many ministers have felt: an anxiety that inertia, failure to grow, reluctance to go out and share the good news, even conflict between members or church leaders, is somehow the minister's fault. This is patently untrue, so it was timely to have received an email this week from our Baptists Together General Secretary, Lynn Green, encouraging ministers to be 'confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.' [*Philippians 1:6*]. So here's to another year, looking forward to some cake next June!

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 48](#)

[2 Samuel 5:1-10](#)

[Mark 6:1-13](#)

[2 Corinthians 12:1-10](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Great is the LORD, and most worthy of praise, in the city of our God, his holy mountain. Beautiful in its loftiness, the joy of the whole earth, like the heights of Zaphon is Mount Zion, the city of the Great King. God is in her citadels; he has shown himself to be her fortress. [Psalm 48:1-3]

SONGS

[Great Is The Lord And Most Worthy](#)

[Great In Power](#)

PRAYERS

Lord, still me.

Let my mind be inquiring, searching.

Let my heart be open.

Save me from mental rust.

Deliver me from spiritual decay.

Keep me *alive* and alert.

Teach me, that I may teach them.

[*Donald Coggan*]

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. [*Indian Ocean Province*]

Infinite Lord and eternal God,

Rouse your Church in this land,

Restore your people's sense of mission,

And revive your work in holiness and strength.

By your Spirit, teach us to give our energy
Our time, our money, our service and our prayer,

That your kingdom may be advanced

Here and in all the world;

In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

[*Church in Wales*]

SONGS

What A Friend We Have In Jesus

Cannons

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

There is nothing like seeing the stories of the Bible come to life. I don't mean when they are acted out, although a well produced drama can help. I mean more like when you stand in the place where the actual Biblical drama took place, and when you close your eyes you can see the action unfolding right in front of you. In October 2017 Ian Pratt and I had the privilege of standing in the very spot written about in our reading from 2 Samuel 5:1-10. As we descended into the subterranean passages beneath the fairly recently rediscovered actual City of David, suddenly in the dimly lit space before us we saw the water shaft and cisterns used by the forces of King David to enter city occupied by the Jebusites and declare it his capital.

David had predicted that his men would need to enter that way, and that the "blind and lame" would not be able to stop them – "blind" because they would not see where David's men were coming from and "lame" because the Jebusites would be powerless to intervene. Thus, we read, 'David captured the fortress of Zion – which is the City of David.' Right on the edge of what is known as The Old City of Jerusalem, dominated by its Ottoman fortified walls, David's City is nevertheless impressive dominating over the steep valley. You can see in the excavations today how the terraces of the City are built upwards and inwards from the fortified walls below.

So David is at long last King, and he has established his Throne in his City. One of the

marks of David's reign is his mixture of strength and vulnerability. The David we see here is hardly recognisable as the young man taking care of the sheep we see only chapters earlier. A lot has happened in between. A lot of babbling brooks have been crossed; a lot of giants have been slain. And it will only be a few more chapters before we read about David's fallen sinful nature once more. For now, David is about whom the Lord said, "You shall shepherd my people Israel, and you shall become their ruler."

There is something reassuring that God calls real people, not models of perfection, to serve him and take leadership roles in his kingdom, to pastor or shepherd his flock. Reflecting on my own ordination to Baptist ministry this week I am reassured that this is so. How impossible and unbearable it would have been otherwise. The leader who reflects this most in the early church is the apostle Paul. In our reading from 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 we encounter Paul reflecting on his life, particularly as one standing in the presence of God. Now from what we read of Paul's ministry in the Acts of the Apostles there are a lots of successes that Paul could brag about. The various dangers he faced and in Christ was victorious over; the many new converts to the Way of Jesus Christ; the many gathered church communities of new disciples scattered around the north east end of the Mediterranean.

Yet Paul insists on boasting about none of this. Rather, Paul is conscious of his many weaknesses and failures. To prevent him becoming conceited he talks about the thorn in his flesh that he has been given. In response to his hardships and struggles, the Lord assures Paul, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made per-

fect in weakness.’

For those who God has called and set apart to serve him, whose lives are consecrated in ministry, attacks will come thick and fast. That has certainly been my experience. They most surely come from outside, from those who have no investment in the work of God’s kingdom; but sadly they come from inside too, from among those who claim to be part of the family, from those who frankly should know better. Everyone who serves God needs to maintain Godly humility and focus upon Christ and the community Jesus calls them to serve, in whatever capacity, otherwise the temptation to glory in power and influence is too much. Yet such humility can easily be accompanied by attacks of self-doubt, nagging failure, and a real experience of impostor syndrome. The response from Jesus is exactly the same as he gave to Paul: ‘My grace is sufficient for you, my power is made perfect in weakness.’

There is something really significant in the model that Jesus himself gives, as recorded in Mark 6:1-13. Church leaders are not called to glory in their own position, but to use their position to equip and encourage others to do Christ’s work. Even Jesus, we read, faced opposition. In this case it is from his own people, his own family, his own community, from those who knew him best and again who frankly should have known better. “Who is this who teaches, who performs miracles, who does these amazing things? Oh, its nobody, its just the odd job man whose family we know!” Thus Jesus is dismissed, and they took offence at him! He said, ‘A prophet is not without honour except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home... He was amazed at their

lack of faith.’ So how does Jesus respond to this? He does absolutely nothing; rather he carries on preaching and teaching from village to village and then sets about doing what he wants his disciples to emulate in their own ministry too.

He sends them out two by two and gives them authority to do what he has been doing. He gives them detailed instructions not to be bogged down where they don’t see results, where they are criticised or face opposition, but to focus on where the good news is received and where the people will repent. He sends us out likewise, not to reflect on successes or failures, not to criticise others or ourselves, but to get on with the job. I don’t know about you, but inspired with the Spirit of Christ, I can just about hear the apostle Paul whistling as he gets on with the task that he has been given: ‘That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.’

When I am weak, then I am strong!

SONG

[How Great Thou Art](#)

BLESSING

Walk about Zion, go round her, count her towers, consider well her ramparts, view her citadels, that you may tell of them to the next generation. For this is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even to the end. [Psalm 48:12-14]

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.xy>