

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

11 July 2021

Dear Friends,

I'm not sure that a week goes by that is not eventful, either in our personal lives or in the country at large. If you aren't aware of the excitement over the football and England's place in today's Euros final, then I don't know what to say! The last time that England were in the final of a major tournament I was pageboy at my uncle and aunt's wedding; this time I have promised to pay more attention to what is happening on the pitch. I am reminded that all too often when really important things are going on that affect our lives, we can easily be somewhere else entirely.

Last Sunday we had the privilege of welcoming a new church member and the opportunity to think and reflect on the nature and responsibilities of church membership. Membership of a Baptist Church is the way that the covenant relationship between Christ and his disciples is expressed in the local church. There are no rights or privileges of membership, but there are responsibilities. Ryde Baptist Church's rules (constitution) make it clear that membership is for those who commit themselves to serving Christ within the church and beyond, and acknowledge their responsibilities as church members.

So unlike other membership organisations, membership itself is the privilege for those who are committed to serve Christ. The responsibilities of membership include attending worship services, prayer and Bible study, taking part in communion as a privilege and priority, using gifts to help the church and advance the purpose

of the church (its ministry and mission) through its activities, giving regular financial support to the church proportionate to ability, and upholding Christian values. Attending and participating in church members' meetings is a responsibility, not a right, but only in so far as all the other responsibilities are also met. Attending church meetings but not being committed to the other ministry and mission activities is disrespectful towards God, fellow church members and towards the church.

Neither is a church members' meeting like that of other membership organisations. Although every member can participate it is not a democracy. The focus is to listen, not primarily to each other's views and opinions, but to the Holy Spirit. The purpose of a church meeting is to 'discern the mind of Christ'. It is never a 'business meeting' although there is always the temptation to turn it into one; it is more important than that. Jesus said 'I will build my church', so our main responsibility is to listen to him. The ministry and mission of the church is about the kingdom of God. 'Thy kingdom come' we pray. So a church is not a democracy but a theocracy.

The normal route to becoming a member of the church is through believer's baptism. As we have said before, in a Baptist church this is through immersion in water, symbolising dying and rising with Christ. It is another privilege that in the near future we will be holding a service of believers' baptism. What a joy on earth as it is in heaven. If God is prompting you to be baptised too, please do let me know.

Soon we will be able to worship in person again after almost eighteen months on Zoom. Just a little while longer though, on Zoom 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. If you'd like us to send you the weekly Zoom links, or want any other information, please let us know. We will do our best to help. 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.xy>

BIBLE READINGS

[Psalm 24](#)

[2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19](#)

[Mark 6:14-29](#)

[Ephesians 1:3-14](#)

CALL TO WORSHIP

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it on the waters. Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god. [*Psalm 24:1-4*]

SONGS

[All Hail The Power Of Jesus' Name](#)

[King Of Kings Majesty](#)

PRAYERS

Lord Jesus Christ, I admit that I am a sinner. I confess my sins to you, especially those upon my conscience. I firmly believe that you died for me to bear away my sins. And now, according to your promise, I open my heart to you. Come in, Lord Jesus, and be my Saviour and Friend for ever.

[Anon]

I'm glad to be alive – to breathe and walk; to laugh and cry; to see life's beauty and its grandeur. I know, too, its beastliness, squalor; its poverty, disease and hate. As I give thanks for all my blessings, give me, Lord, the will to share with others what I have so undeservedly been given. Make me loving, courteous, considerate; give me a listening ear, a compassionate heart and a generous mind. Let me live my life in your sight for others so that they, too, may find you and give thanks. [*J C Vockler*]

Lord God, our beginning and our end: you were with us at our birth, and with us though our life: you are with us through our life, be with us at our death: and because your love and mercy will not leave us then, help us to pass through death and rise to everlasting life with you. [*Anon*]

Our Father, may all people honour you, May your rule be accepted and your purpose be accomplished, as in heaven so on earth now. Give us today the food we need. Forgive us the wrong we have done as we forgive those who have wronged us. Save us from losing our faith in you, and deliver us from the power of evil. [*Anglican Church of Canada. Experimental Liturgy*]

SONGS

Lord I Need You

Refiner's Fire (Purify My Heart)

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

A Tale Of Two Kings. Our Bible readings this morning tell the tale of two kings. They are both very different from each other. The first is King David, whose rise to the throne we have been following over the last few weeks. The second is King Herod, the mention of whose name firstly fills us with dread, and secondly leads us to ask, 'which Herod?' For there were eight Herods, seven of whom appear in the Bible. Ours is Herod Antipas (21BC to 39AD), a son of Herod the Great.

The Tale of David. The ascent of David is exciting, and brings to a climax the desire of God's people for a king, combined with the will of God that the King be a person of faith and conviction. Anointed and proven, David has built his city and prepared a place for God to dwell - although the privilege of building a temple will later be deferred to his son, Solomon. David prepares to bring the ark of God, with its tablets of the law inside and the two cherubim marking the presence of God on top, from its resting place at the home of Abinadab in Baalah up to the City of David.

There is a hiatus in the story due to a careless clumsy moment when Uzzah touches the ark at the threshing floor of Nakon, and loses his life as a consequence. This caused David to lose confidence. 'How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?' There was thus a delay of three months while the ark rested instead in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. However, the family and household of Obed-Edom are blessed by God for the honour shown him.

On hearing about the blessing, David's confidence is restored and he finally brings the ark of God up into the City of David. There is much celebrating, with sacrifices, and dancing, and music. The spectacle was enough to rouse the jealousy of the former King Saul's daughter Michal. David honoured God and the ark was given a new home in the tent that had been pitched for it. There is rejoicing and there is feasting, and as at every serious celebration ever since, there is cake!

The Tale of Herod. Herod Antipas 'ruled' under Roman oversight the provinces of Galilee and Perea, which he had been given by the Emperor Augustus in 4BC on the death of Herod the Great. Perea was east of the river Jordan and stretched some way down the further shore of the Dead Sea. It was at the fortified palace of Machaerus, locally known as Makawir, one of the many built by his father throughout the kingdom, and not that far south and east from where the prophet was baptising, that John the Baptist was imprisoned and beheaded as recorded in our story from Mark's Gospel.

Perched on a hilltop overlooking the Sea, locals also refer to the ruins as Qala'at Al Meshneqa (the Castle of the Gallows) because of its macabre history. Herod was everything the David was not. In a bad way. It was pointing out Herod's errors that had got John the Baptist noticed and into trouble. However, as Mark 6:16 implies, Herod is not without sensitivity and conscience, and the account begins after John's beheading. He hears about all the things that Jesus is doing, and he believes the rumours that here is John the Baptist come back to life. He is a haunted man. The story of John's death is as sordid as the reasons John had challenged Herod.

Herod's conscience might have been troubled after the event, but he was easily seduced by the erotic salacious movements of his niece Salome under the manipulative choreography of her mother Herodias. As his brother's wife, here was the woman that the law prohibited Herod from marrying, something that John had been brave (or foolhardy) enough to bring to their attention.

Two Kings But Not The Same. All kings are not alike. Herod's flaws were the mark of the man. History only remembers him for the grubby events around John's death and later for his part in the accusation, 'trial', and execution of Jesus. What a terrible reputation to carry. Herod carried the ear of the Jewish religious authorities, even petitioning their Roman oppressors on their behalf on occasion, but in his personal life he was not a godly man.

King David on the other hand was anointed by God. He was a godly man. Yet he was still a human being. He made plenty of mistakes, some of them as deadly as Herod's, but from origin to end he sought to honour the heart of God. For his sins he lost the contract to build God's Temple, a project Solomon would later tackle. Solomon's was the First Temple. Ironically the Second Temple was the project that Herod the Great most obsessed about, and which was still not completed at the time of Jesus many years later.

The King of Kings. Earthly kings fade into the shadows compared with the King of Kings. It is at Jesus that the lives of kings David and Herod meet. Jesus, born in the family line of David, known as the 'Son of David', meets his end during the reign of Herod the Roman puppet. Ironically despite his cruelty and depravity Herod the Great is still known as a hero among the

Jewish people for his work on the Temple. His son's reputation gets no such restoration. The lessons from David were lost.

'Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord?' asks David. 'Who may stand in his holy place?' He knows the answer. 'The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, and does not trust in an idol or swear by a false god.' Herod should have listened to John, but he was unable to. David's question and answer challenges us to consider where we put our hope and trust. In kings and chariots? In structures and institutions? Or in a heavenly missional community made up of Godly people committed to serving Him?

This is the Church that Jesus builds, 'blessed... in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.' [*Ephesians 1:3*] This is the true kingdom that will never be shaken, to which he calls his true sons and daughters. When we put our hope and trust in worldly matters we lose sight of the Holy Spirit who is 'guaranteeing our inheritance'. [*Ephesians 1:14*] So, lift up your heads...that the King of glory may come in! [*Psalm 24:9*]

SONG

[Now Thank We All our God](#)

BLESSING

They will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God their Saviour. Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob. [*Psalm 24:5-6*]

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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