

RYDE BAPTIST CHURCH SUNDAY SERVICE

25 July 2021

Dear Friends,

I've been doing quite a bit of looking back recently. I remember when I was at Bristol Baptist College the catering company that provided meals had a board up outside the kitchen with lots of notices including the week's menus. One of the documents stood out from the rest and it was headed Mission Statement. I cannot remember precisely what it said, but it was something like 'Our mission is to provide healthy, nutritious, and appetising food for our customers.' You can imagine the reaction this got from fellow students, particularly when at lunchtimes we were greeted by yet another sloppy quiche. The sloppy quiche became so renowned that we named the student magazine Sloppy Quiche in its honour. I was its editor!

Seriously, though, Mission Statements can be important things. But they do need to ring true and reflect the reality of the situation. There are lots of similar types of 'statements' that you may have heard of, such as Vision Statements or Purpose Statements. Purpose Statements became a centre of focus many years back when Rick Warren published his book *The Purpose Driven Church*. Many individual churches or Christian organisations have a Statement of Faith to make it clear what they believe in contrast to another church or organisation. Many Baptists believe that the Bible or one of the ancient Christian creeds is all that is necessary, whilst others may belong to the Evangelical Alliance which has a specific Basis of Faith which its members need to agree to.

As Baptist churches in membership of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, or Baptists Together as it is known today, there is a Declaration of Principle which unites us. This isn't by any means a full Statement of Beliefs, but in many ways combines a Vision, Purpose and Mission Statement rolled up into one, as well as outlining those defining features of a Baptist Union.

At its simplest, a Vision Statement expresses what we see or hope to see. 'Thy Kingdom Come' is the vision of the Lord's prayer, seeing or foreseeing the time when God's kingdom is fully found among us. A Purpose Statement on the other hand expresses what we are here for, literally what our purpose is. The old Westminster Catechism asked about the main purpose of human beings, and the question is answered as 'Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever.' In terms of the purposes of the church, Rick Warren sums them up as 'worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and mission.' If a Vision Statement describes the big picture, and a Purpose Statement describes what we are here for, a Mission Statement expresses what we are going to do about it, out of all the many things we could do.

Vision, Purpose and Mission Statements aren't just for churches or organisations. They are equally useful for individuals too. Lets use this summer time to ask these questions of God and ourselves: what is the Vision of my life? What is the Purpose of my life, why am I here? What is the Mission that God has given me, based on the gifts he has graciously equipped me with?

Today is our last Zoom online service at 10.30am, and we will have the opportunity to celebrate Communion together for the final time in this particular way (as far as we know for the time being). Next week on 1 August 2021 at 10.30am, and for the five Sundays in August, we will meet in our Ryde Baptist Church premises on George Street for the first time this year. We are deliberately planning for these to be informal Sunday mornings together, as Summertime Specials if you like. There will be an opportunity to worship, pray and reflect on scripture, but a focus will also be on resuming fellowship in person after such a long time apart. Understandably there may be some anxiety in returning, which is why we are planning to do so gently, but please rest assured that we will do all we can so that people feel as comfortable as possible. We must all be sensitive and responsive to each other's needs to stay safe and secure. Covid-19 risk prevention policies and procedures are still in place, so you will be requested to sign in, sanitise your hands, wear a face mask, respect distances between people, and all the other reasonable precautions. The great thing is that we can share together and we may even be able to sing as confidence grows! If you have any Covid-19 symptoms or have been notified that you still need to isolate, please do not attend but let us know so that we can be in touch. There is more information on our website at <https://rydebaptist.xyz> and there will be more updates in the weeks ahead.

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 14

2 Samuel 11:1-15

John 6:1-21

Ephesians 3:14-21

BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN Declaration of Principle

The Basis of the Baptist Union is:

1. That our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh, is the sole and absolute authority in all matters pertaining to faith and practice, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and that each Church has liberty, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to interpret and administer His laws.
2. That Christian Baptism is the immersion in water into the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, of those who have professed repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who 'died for our sins according to the Scriptures; was buried, and rose again the third day'.
3. That it is the duty of every disciple to bear personal witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.

This Declaration of Principle, first introduced in 1873 (and gradually refined in 1904, 1906 and 1938), forms the basis of understanding between those that belong to the Baptist Union. Its three-fold structure focusing on Authority, Baptism and Mission, is firmly rooted in the Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew 28:16-20.

For more information about the Declaration, go to today's page of our website.

CALL TO WORSHIP

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Ephesians 3:16-17

SONGS

Come As You Are

All Heaven Declares

PRAYERS

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. *[Daily Office]*

O Lord, prepare us for all the events of the day; for we know not what a day may bring forth. Give us grace to deny ourselves; to take up our cross daily, and to follow in the steps of our Lord and Master. *[Matthew Henry]*

Strengthen for service, Lord, the hands that have taken hold things; may the ears that have heard your word be deaf to clamour and dispute; may the tongues which have sung your praise be free from deceit; may the eyes which have seen the tokens of your love shine with the light of hope; and may the bodies which have been fed with your body be refreshed with the fullness of your life; glory to you for ever. *[Malabar Liturgy]*

Empower me
to be a bold participant,
rather than a timid saint in waiting,
in the difficult ordinariness of now;
to exercise the authority of honesty,
rather than to defer to power,
or deceive to get it;
to influence someone for justice,
rather than impress anyone for gain;
and, by grace, to find treasures
of joy, of friendship, of peace
hidden in the fields of the daily
you give me to plough. *[Ted Loder]*

Lord, thank you for today, for what has been received, and all that still lies ahead.

SONGS

Before The Throne Of God Above

I Will Offer Up My Life

MINI-SERMON OUTLINE

Our reading from John's Gospel launches our series of reflections over August on the theme of Bread For The Journey. As the narrative makes clear, the first disciples were on a journey with Jesus and we are on a journey with Jesus too. The Feeding of the 5,000 is very familiar, but as with other accounts we can expect John's retelling to contain some unique insights when we compare it to the other Gospels.

John refers to the signs Jesus performs, rather than miracles. What are they a sign of? Many things probably. That he is the One sent by God. Having talked about Moses in the previous chapter, we might expect God's servant to perform signs, and through Moses the people were certainly provided with manna food for their wilderness journey. At the same time these signs demonstrate what the other disciples describe as the kingdom of God being in the hear and now, among us.

So, there are too many people (way over the 5,000 men mentioned because there would have also been many women and children present) to be able to feed. Andrew's question about how far one boy's five small barley loaves and two small fish would stretch is a really good question. But as always, when our good questions are given to Jesus he works his wonders. Here was a kingdom sign that the people recognised, but the time was not yet right for Jesus to be fully recognised as king.

What then, out of the many things in this story, should we hold onto today as we stand on the threshold of a new era?

1. Firstly, the size of the task ahead of us is enormous. Over lockdown we have lost much ground. There is a lot to do in a short time. But we can't do everything. Over the last year or so a truth from this story has stuck in my mind, probably because it is used a lot by Dallas Jenkins, the writer and director of *The Chosen*. It goes something like this: I'm not supposed to feed the crowd, just provide the loaves and the fish. This is really powerful. It reminds us to be aware of the big picture, but that our part in serving the Lord consists in offering to him the gifts that we have, little or small as they may appear, so that he can multiply and use them.

2. Secondly, if Jesus can feed the large crowd using the small loaves and small fishes provided by the small lad, just imagine what he can do with the many, many things that we have to offer him. The thing is, we have to trust Jesus to build his church. Yes it is his church. And he has said that he will build his church. But just like in this story we have to trust Jesus and give them over to his use. We may say we trust him, but when we withhold those gifts, or try to do things our own way, then that essential trust is obviously missing. There's a huge community around us with all sorts of various needs that can only be met by Jesus the Living Bread. He has provided us with the means for him to do this, if only we hand them over and trust him.

3. Thirdly, returning to the image of the manna in the wilderness. God provided for his people throughout their long journey, despite their frequent disobedience. The 5,000 were fed 'as much as they wanted' on that day by Jesus. Jesus teaches us to pray 'give us this day our daily bread.' The reality is that God will provide the food to sustain us on our jour-

ney, whatever that journey holds and wherever that journey takes us.

When we have submitted ourselves to the rule and reign of Jesus in our lives, our vision of what is possible should be so much bigger and stronger. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is that they, 'being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.'

In the story of the Feeding of the 5,000 we have an enormous Vision of God's kingdom right in front of our eyes, a sign or vision to inform and inspire. In this story we, as disciples, learn our Purpose which is to gather and hand over to Jesus all the gifts for him to use to build his church. We must see what Jesus does, and actively participate in his Mission. His mission is our mission. The only possible way to fulfil his mission is to do it his way!

SONG

Build Your Kingdom Here

BLESSING

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

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.xyz>