

1st Hymn: by C Wesley (T Richmond Thomas Haweis 1734-1820)

- 1) O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of our God and King, the triumphs of His grace.
- 2) Jesus the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease,
'tis music in the sinner's ears, 'tis life and health and peace.
- 3) He breaks the power of cancelled sin, He sets the prisoner free,
His blood can make the foulest clean, His blood availed for ne.
- 4) He speaks and listening to His voice new life the dead receive,
the mournful broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.
- 5) Hear Him ye deaf; His praise ye dumb, your loosened tongues employ,
ye blind behold your Saviour come, and leap ye lame for joy.
- 6) My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad the honours of your name.

Prayer:

Dear Father,

We thank you today for this grace in which we stand, because you accept us coming in the name of your Son, whose righteousness you have imputed to us. Accept our worship today, and lead us in our time together, and enable us to pray and worship you in a way which pleases and honours you, In Christ's name, Amen

2nd Hymn by Isaac Watts (T Nativity Henry Lates 1826-1912)

- 1) Come let us join our cheerful songs with angels round the throne;
ten thousand thousand are their tongues, but all their joys are one.
- 2)"Worthy the Lamb that died" they cry, "to be exalted thus,"
"Worthy the Lamb" our lips reply, "for He was slain for us."
- 3) Jesus is worthy to receive honour and power divine,
and blessings more than we can give, be, Lord, forever Thine.
- 4) The whole creation joins in one, to bless the sacred Name,
of Him that sits upon the throne, and to adore the Lamb.

Readings:

- Psalm 111
- Mark 4:35-41

Intercessions:

Dear Father, we pray for our land today, and our leaders state and federal. Grant them wisdom, and discernment that they may lead us well. We are indeed fortunate in the provision of so many good things compared with many places. But we acknowledge that

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things alone do not make us wise. So we pray for the insight so seek justice and righteousness, and spiritual awareness and growth that we may grow in true wisdom and become generous in our giving to many who are less fortunate, and so prepare us for true servanthship to less fortunate nations.

We pray today for Ukraine, invaded by an unscrupulous neighbour, that they may endure, and continue to be strong, and not weaken to bullying. And so give them resilience, and a determination to stand strong. Much of the world sees their plight and supports them in many ways - may they know your keeping power, and continue to look to you for your strength.

We see chaos, and many bad things occurring in the Middle East, where even the news we get may be distorted by terrorist bodies who have their own agenda for the way they tell the story. But Father, you know the true situation, and those there who look to you for your help. So come to their help, and grant them power to continue, and bring about your purposes which we believe only you can do with true righteousness. Only so we believe can true peace occur in that war-torn land, for your will only will bring about a satisfactory conclusion, which no politician or bureaucrat can see clearly or bring about.

And so, dear Father, may you Kingdom come and your will be done on this earth at this time. And we ask these our prayers in the all-prevailing name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, Amen.

3rd hymn: *by P. Bliss*

- 1) When peace like a river attendeth my way, when sorrows like sea-billows roll;
with whatever my lot Thou hast taught me to say "It is well, it is well my soul".
It is well (it is well) with my soul (with my soul), it is well, it is well with my soul.
- 2) Tho Satan should buffet, though trials should come, let this blessed assurance control,
that Christ hath regarded my helpless estate and hath shed His own blood for my soul.
- 3) My sin, O the bliss of that glorious thought, my sin, not in part but the whole
is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more, praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul.
- 4) And Lord haste the day when faith shall be sight, the clouds be rolled up as a scroll,
the trumpet shall sound, and the Lord shall descend, "even so" it is well with my soul.

The message: "Fear"

A few years ago I was listening to the ABC talkback program on the wireless where a frequent guest professor was talking about "beasties". He was a Zoologist. He said what I think quite a few people believe – that we never need to be scared of animals, just to respect them and give them space! To crowd them makes them afraid, and it is then that they might bite or defend themselves in other ways!

He pointed out that many people have a craven, illogical and unrealistic fear of some animals!

My youngest daughter has a fear of spiders which has no real logical basis! This is what we call a "phobia" – from the Greek word *phobos* : *fear*. It means a "slavish" fear. She is bright

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– much brighter than me I suspect! She is a senior member of a personnel-management business. She gets sent to other states or territories to interview people for top public servant positions – recently she was sent to New Guinea to do this! On her own! I might fear going to New Guinea on my own! It is not really a country under good stable government, and crime is rife!! And I said to her “Weren’t you *afraid* of going alone to New Guinea?” “No”, she said, “they looked after me well, and the interview was in a top hotel!”

And I may argue with her about spiders – *they* don’t kill many humans!

A *Redback* may kill a child but it is rare!

Funnel web spiders have killed 7 Australians, only in NSW and over 50 years or more. So logic and brains don’t seem to explain fear when it comes to spiders!

It is a phobia (Arachnophobia). We used to have a nice big huntsman in our church - she was about 3 inches across and sat high up on the wall (about 14 feet up), listening to the singing, and some *very* good sermons! No-one seemed worried about her. And I would never kill a huntsman. But my good graces don’t extend to Redbacks, because I have grandchildren, and I would not want them to be harmed. So we all fear some things!

The road is vastly more dangerous, probably >100,000 times more!

Some fear ghosts (that seems to be fear of the *supernatural*), some fear lightning and thunder (our dog used to fear them, and try and get in our bed!) I fear being in a very enclosed small space! (I have a degree of claustrophobia!) I jumped into the Murray as a youth, and just stayed down in the cold – I thought I would immediately bob up! But I was very thin then, and I had to swim up! (So I was afraid of fresh water!)

Some fears are however, sensible, for instance fear of travelling at great speed! Many who I think should fear that, *don’t*! And I have seen a great number of people who have died or been smashed up in an accident! Sometimes they are not fixable, and I used to have to certify them instead, in the back of an ambulance! Almost certainly they should have had more fear of speed, or fear of breaking the law! Perhaps they had *never seen* an accident!

So some fears are sensible, and they can save your life!

Many of these fears, mentioned or not, have a common factor. They are fears about something that might threaten you – even kill you! So they turn out to be a fear of one thing mainly – a *fear of death*!

The question asked me many times in my life was “Is it serious, Doc?” I recognized that as a *code* for “Will it kill me?” (Not many people would say it as bluntly as that!)

Now there is a common saying about the great certainties of life, that is: “The only certain things in life, are – *death* and *taxes*!”

(But my oldest daughter was a nurse, and she nursed in Saudi Arabia for 7 years and guess what – yes, *no taxes*! But even there, the death rate is running at 100%!)

In fact in all history the death rate is running exceedingly close to 100% There are just a couple that come to mind that did not die – Enoch was one: he “*was not, for God took him*”! So he was “was-notted”! (it’s very rare!)

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And Elijah was another – he appeared to go up to heaven in a “whirlwind” and a “fiery chariot” was seen but I’m not sure if it had anything to do with his mode of transport! All I know is that it was not a standard death!

So death is the **one absolute certainty** that awaits every living thing!

Doesn’t it seem rather a shame when the only thing in life so many people fear – is the *only* thing which is absolutely inevitable ... death! *But is it inevitable?*

St. Paul told the Christians at Corinth that Christ “must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet!” (That is – conquered them all!) For he was King of Kings, and Lord of Lords!

And then he adds *“The last enemy to be destroyed is death!”* (1 Cor 15:26)

When did that happen? When he rose from the dead! That was a triumphant declaration that death could not hold him! He had *defeated* man’s last enemy!

But before these events Jesus had had some interesting interactions with his disciples and others during his ministry.

Jairus was the ruler of a synagogue, and had asked Jesus to come and heal his daughter who was on the point of death. And then Jesus had been delayed on his way, and while he was dealing with a problem, a servant had come from the ruler’s house, and said “Your daughter is dead; don’t trouble the Teacher any longer!” But Jesus, hearing the news, answered the servant (and probably Jairus too) “Do not fear; *only believe!*” What did they fear? Presumably **Death itself**, and all the associations with it! The *big* enemy! Jesus was to see this fear many times!

As we read, once Jesus and the disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee in a boat when a sudden storm caught them, and the wind and waves arose and started swamping the boat. And Jesus was actually asleep on a cushion – clearly he wasn’t afraid!

And the disciples woke him, crying out “Lord, save us, we are perishing!” And he said to them “Why are you so fearful, O you of little faith?” And he rose, and rebuked the wind and the raging waves, and they ceased! There was a great calm! (*But did you notice!*) The disciples were *still more afraid!* (what is this fear? surely fear of the supernatural, the numinous, the holy, the divine – **God is here!**). And they marvelled, and said to one another “Who then *is* this, that he commands even wind and the sea, and they obey him? (Mark 4:35-41) (I think deep down they really knew that that by now!)

So, you see, fear of death was exchanged for a fear of the inexplicable – the divine!

The writer to Hebrews nails it! He admits the real problem!

“Since the children share in flesh and blood, He himself (Jesus) partook of the same nature, that through death He might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage” (Heb 2:14-15)

I saw this fear many times in my practice! (When I had to give a bad prognosis!)

So the truth is out – death is now not inevitable, and we do not now need to fear it! This is an essential part of the Gospel of Christ – this is why it is good news!

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So *our guilt* has been judged – *in him*. He bore our judgment, paid our penalty, released us from our guilt, gave us life instead of the threat of death! The “sting” of death which is guilt, *has been* withdrawn, thoroughly dealt with, and we have been set free! We only have to *receive* his free gift – and acknowledge it! (That is the gospel!)

The psalmist said “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom!*”

Why is it *wise* you may ask? Because it brings us – to truth, to God in Christ, who conquered death for all time, and gives us this “unspeakable gift!”

So none of us need fear death!

So there seem to be a law (that is this is how things are!).... EITHER you will fear God, where wisdom begins (and you increase in wisdom all your life), ... OR you will fear many other things – illness, or poverty, or ghosts, or your past life! (it may come back to haunt you), or your enemies, or ISIS, or a nuclear holocaust, or a pandemic, because all these things threaten us with our greatest fear – *death!*

And it will be a slavish fear, it will grind you down and *terrorise* you! You will not know true peace! Whereas the fear of the Lord is a reverential fear, a healthy fear, a wise fear, and everything else in your life will be ordered by that first priority! It will be ONE...or... THE OTHER! God grant us understanding and experience of His peace which abolishes all slavish fear. Amen.

4th hymn by Edmund Budry (T Maccbeus, George Handel 1685-1759)

1) Thine be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won,
angels in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
kept the folded graveclothes where thy body lay...

Thine be the glory, risen conquering Son, endless is the victory Thou o'er death hast won.

2) Lo Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb,
lovingly He greets us, scatter fear and gloom;
let the church with gladness, hymns of triumph sing,
for her Lord is living, death hath lost its sting...

3) No more we doubt Thee, glorious Prince of life,
life is nought without Thee, aid us in our strife,
make us more than conquerors, through Thy deathless love,
bring us safe through Jordan to Thy home above...

Benediction:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen

This service was prepared by Neil McIntosh (M.B.B.S. F.R.A.C.S.) for HopeNet SA