

1st hymn by Benjamin Waugh 1839-1908 T. Edgware

- 1) Now let us see Thy beauty Lord, as we have seen before;
And by that beauty quicken us to love Thee and adore.
- 2) 'Tis easy when with simple mind Thy loveliness we see,
to consecrate ourselves afresh to duty and to Thee.
- 3) Our every feverish mood is cooled, and gone is every load
when we can lose the love of self and find the love of God.
- 4) 'Tis by Thy loveliness we're won to home and Thee again,
and as we are Thy children true, we are more truly men.
- 5) Lord it is coming to ourselves when thus we come to Thee,
the bondage of Thy loveliness is perfect liberty.
- 6) So now we come to ask of Thee what Thou hast often given,
the vision of that loveliness which is the life of heaven.

Prayer:

Dear Father, we are delighted to meet in fellowship this morning, for we meet as the Body of Christ knowing that we will be received, both our worship and our prayers, because we come in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ, Amen

2nd hymn by Horatius Bonar (T. St Fulbert H Gauntlett 1805-76)

- 1) Fill Thou my life, O lord my God, in every part with praise,
that my whole being may proclaim Thy being and Thy ways.
- 2) Not for the lip of praise alone, nor e'en the praising heart,
I ask but for a life made up of praise in every part.
- 3) Praise in the common things of life, its goings out and in;
Praise in each duty and each deed however small and mean.
- 4) Fill every part of me with praise, let all my being speak
of Thee and of Thy love O lord, poor 'though I be and weak,
- 5) So shalt Thou Lord, from me e'en me, receive Thy glory due,
And so shall I begin on earth the song forever new.
- 6) So shall no part of day or night from sacredness be free,
but all my life in every step be fellowship with Thee.

Readings:

- Psalm 46
- John 14:1-9a

Intercessions:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the privilege you have given us, according to the word of the faithful Apostle that we may and should pray for all kings and those in authority over us, so that we may lead peaceable lives in a peaceful society.

We bring to you our prayers for your world - a world which seems to always be in trouble, and for which no amount of education or encouragement have resulted in improving the lot of its residents.

Thank you for the land in which we live, and for freedom to worship you freely, even though the majority of its residents may have lost their adherence to the Christian faith. We are grateful that Australia was colonised by the British whose society was essentially based on Christian faith, and where our parliament still includes the Lord's prayer in their preliminaries, despite attempts to remove it.

We pray that in our day those who preach your word will be faithful to, and uncompromising with, that word, and that same word will still unleash its ancient power, and that your Spirit will draw many to Jesus.

We pray today for the trouble spots of the world, where war is still being waged. We pray for Ukraine, that many of that land will continue to look to you, and pray that they will even increase their cry to you for help, and that you will hear them.

And thank you that in our country we can vote without blood in the streets!

We pray for the Middle East, with the conflict between Israel and their surrounding nations, the site of strife for the greater part of recorded history. Wars are never good, but even in the midst of such strife, you are there. And you care about the people more than we do, and your principles of justice and righteousness do not change. We pray that you will make your Will known to the people of that region, and as they look to you, they will find that Will, and be encouraged, and know that you will bless all those who trust in you. And we pray that common sense and God-sense will prevail, to prevent a full scale war between multiple nations.

We pray for small churches which meet regularly and worship faithfully on the first day of the week, as Christians have done since Jesus rose from the dead on that day. Thank you that size of congregations is irrelevant in regard to truth and faithfulness, and that you will bless all small churches, and grow them in maturity and truth, and build them up in their most holy faith, as they continue to seek to follow your word.

We ask these our prayers in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus the Christ.

Amen.

3rd hymn John G Whittier 1807-92 (T Green Hill A Peace 1844-1912)

- 1) Who fathoms the eternal thought? who talks of scheme and plan?
the Lord is God! He needeth not the poor device of man.
- 2) Here in the maddening maze of things, when tossed by storm and flood,
to one fixed ground my spirit clings, I know that God is good!

Ultimate Security

- 3) I long for household voices gone, for vanished smiles I long,
but God has led my dear ones on, and He can do no wrong.
- 4) I know not what the future holds of marvel or surprise,
assured alone that life and death his mercy underlies.
- 5) And if my heart and flesh are weak to bear an untried pain,
the bruised reed He will not break, but strengthen and sustain.
- 6) And so beside the silent sea I wait the muffled oar;
no harm from Him can come to me on ocean or on shore.
- 7) I know not where His islands lift their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift beyond His love and care.

Message: Ultimate Security

Jesus was speaking to a group of rather frightened disciples in this reading!

He had just celebrated the Passover with his disciples, his last act before He would be betrayed to the Jewish leaders who were intent on getting rid of Him! And the disciples knew that they wanted to kill him – so did most of the people! And here he was – in the city that “..kills the prophets and stones those who were sent to it” as Jesus had told them with great sadness! (Matt 23:37) The disciples probably had heard that statement. *Jesus* was a Prophet! And they would have expected big trouble at any moment! Jesus knew their fear, and gave them a bit of good news to sustain them through the coming trial, which he understood, and knew they didn't. They would be gathered *again* to where He would be with them: it would be wonderful. It would be OK! He was going to prepare something special for them. At this juncture, Judas had gone. This was an intimate occasion, a tender moment, between this special Master and those who had lived with him for 3 years. In the midst of their fear there was a coming *certainty* (He spoke of it in that way), that would have given them a pang of delight, to help settle their fear of the moment!

And how many thousands of people over 2000 years since that night would have read or heard these words and been hugely comforted? They too identify as His disciples. So His enemies, the leaders or the Roman authorities, or whoever else in their imagination fueled that fear were not going to have any last word – that would be *Jesus'* privilege. Do you know those words?

The disciples had been afraid ever since Jesus “set his face to go to Jerusalem”. He knew exactly what he was going to – it was *they* who were unsettled with almost a nameless fear. This place was dangerous, and these men from Galilee were uncomfortable here in the big city!

Many of us are afraid of the future! We all know 2 things in life cannot be avoided. The taxes we accept as OK. Death – well that is unavoidable, but *not* OK to the natural man! Hospital is the scene of my life's work. I was a Surgeon there for the major part of my working life. I started 3/12 before Flinders Medical Centre opened in 1976, 14 years after I became a doctor, as a Surgeon in the hospital half time, and in private practice the other half. I treated 1000s of patients: I saw 100s die. And I looked into their faces as I had to tell them bad news

about their diagnosis, and I saw – the *fear of death*. In their eyes! St Paul called it the “last enemy of man”. The constant one. The final one! I believe that!

Jesus faced it in this reading.

But I have learned that the fear of death does not have to monopolise us.

I learned that as a teenager, before I did a medical course! It has helped me in a life's work of practice. I came to believe as a teenager that Jesus came to free me, and all of us, of the fear of death. It doesn't have to be. What Jesus said to the disciples was preceding the events that followed, that all the gospel writers tell in great detail. And the historians tell us that these records are remarkably early after the events compared with most of the important events of history: the secular historians are green with envy at the number of early records we have, compared with their records of secular events. I don't think that is by chance! These events are critical in history.

And following the simple record of His life of teaching the truth of his Father, and liberating many from their illnesses and the power of Satan over their lives, he was taken by the authorities, out of envy and because he confronted them with *their own* guilt and wickedness, they put him through a mock trial, and without a trace of a valid reason, (we would call it a "kangaroo court" wouldn't we?), condemned him to death by crucifixion in order to get rid of him. The Roman Governor was complicit in the deception - he *knew* it was out of envy and hatred they had brought him to trial, he knew that the person charged was innocent, and he evaded his responsibility. But none of them knew there was *another* reason, an astounding one, for which Jesus knew He had to die – it was His *Father's plan*, a fulfillment of the prophecies of the OT of the suffering servant who saves his people, by taking their place, and bearing their judgment.

And all the powers of hell were converging on this one evil focus in the city, and pushing for the extinction of their greatest threat ever, this uncompromising Holy Son of God, intent on saving His lost humanity. This was *the* titanic battle, evil's best chance to oust him. And on that Cross as the sinless Son of God bore the sin of the world on behalf of those who would have been crushed and killed by it, the evil powers threw everything they had against him!

I contend that no human being is capable of fully understanding that horror and darkness which assailed the pure spirit of the Holy Son. And as he bore it to the end, “tasting death for every man”, in the limbo of the lost, the hell where we should have been, *for us*, the worst sin that human and evil powers could ever carry out – DEICIDE - became in the hands of a Holy God the greatest act of salvation of a lost world that has occurred since time began!

Only God could do that! The powers of evil would have never foreseen that. And the evidence for what he had achieved was that *death* – the last enemy of man – could not hold *Him*. It had been robbed of its stranglehold over humanity, because its main weapon, GUILT, had been destroyed!

The scriptures put it very simply “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, and raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to many, to Peter, then the twelve...then by more than 500 at once” most of whom were still alive at the time Paul wrote those words.

Then Jesus made other promises to them about the coming of the Spirit, who would empower them to witness to Him as Saviour, and to tell the world the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Then he ascended out of their sight. Their delight was beyond explanation, by anything other than that this was the truth. And the rest, as they say, is history! We now live in 2025 A.D. – “anno Domini”, the year of our lord. And now while we live on earth, we live in “shadowlands” as it has been called, a shadow of the real world which is coming, as Jesus promised to his disciples in today’s reading! And how do we know it is true? God gives us the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth, who makes it clear to us, makes it understandable, and gives the joy of God in our hearts, and fills our hearts with his love, (which is not really every human’s experience, however much we were to wish it was.) And I have known many patients with severe illnesses come to know the truth of this gospel, even as they faced the likelihood that they would not live a great deal longer – their cancer was not curable. And then I have seen them die without any fear at all. It was triumphant!

I will tell you about an old man I operated on when no one else was game. He had been refused surgery in another hospital.

I used to perform quite major surgery in FMC. I wonder how I had the courage now.

I used to perform a particular oesophagectomy especially in older people, in an attempt to avoid opening the chest, which was a rather major trauma to an old person, and inflicting a large pain and blood loss. I used to do a “trans-hiatal oesophagectomy” without opening the chest. I would dissect the stomach so that its blood supply was all from the lower end of the stomach only, and the body and upper end were all mobile.

Then I would dissect through the hiatus of the diaphragm the lower portion of the oesophagus under direct vision. Then I would dissect the rest of the gullet right up into the neck by feel only – until I could see my fingers under the skin of the neck, behind the thyroid gland, having been pushed up “blind” from the abdominal cavity. It used to upset the anaesthetist a bit – my hand alongside the heart would compress it a bit, as it thumped away against my arm. If the heart was not filling well during the compression, the anaesthetist would ask me to give him respite, and let the blood pressure pick up again! It was high risk, but I did it many times, and it would save a lot of blood loss and post-operative pain. Then I would open the neck, divide the upper gullet, pull the gullet down into the abdomen, take it off the stomach, then pull the stomach back up into the neck, elongating it into a long tube, which I then connected to the residual gullet in the neck. Hey presto – the gullet was removed and chest intact!

One man was 85, and I wondered if he could survive the procedure. I told him “you may not survive this.” (The alternative was slowly choking on his saliva, and not being able to swallow, so it was not good). This man said:

“Doc, I am a Christian. If you succeed and I survive I will be delighted. If I don’t survive, don’t you be concerned because I won’t be. To be with the Lord will be *even better*! I am not afraid. My son is a pastor and 100s of people will be praying for me AND you. So don’t you worry either!” Can you imagine what that does for one’s confidence?

Ultimate Security

He survived. So did the Anaesthetist! I saw the worry lines disappear from his face as I finished the operation. Can you see how important were the unseen factors in that situation?

All that was true, and the fact of what Jesus did is true. Millions over 2000 years have received that truth, with great joy, and lost their fear of death. To hear and receive that truth will give you a security that nothing else can. Because there is no security in the things we once may have trusted in – our law and order, our police, our social welfare system, our education, our superannuation, our modern medicine. None of these can really secure us. Only a living Saviour, who secured our release from the “last enemy of man”. So trust Him! And tell someone – your minister, or a chaplain, or one of these people who have come today to share this wonderful truth with you because they love him for what he has done, and who He is. This is our true and only ultimate security!

For God is good. His steadfast love endures for ever.

Amen.

4th hymn by Edmund Budry (T Maccabaeus GF 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, scatters fear and gloom;
let the church with gladness hymns of triumph sing,
for her Lord now liveth, 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 us all evermore. Amen.

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