



Sunday 2nd August: Worship at Home

Welcome to this week's edition.

If you can get online join us

Sunday 10.30am	ZOOM Sunday Worship
Sunday 12 noon	ZOOM Youth (11+)
Sunday 4pm	ZOOM NO Kidz Club (5 -12 years)
Tuesday 7pm	ZOOM Bible study
Wednesday 7pm	ZOOM Quiz
TBC	Merge -Youth Zoom (14 years plus)

Call Carl on 07900497326 or email carl.whitewood@salvationarmy.org.uk for the ZOOM information.

There will be no ZOOM KIDZS club now until September

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/8651865167>. Log -in 8651865167

And you can **ring into Zoom by phone!** If you ring 02034815240, followed by 8651865167# then you will hear the meeting! Calls charged at the normal UK rate.

Holiday

Monday 10th to Sunday 16th and Monday 24th to Monday 31st the hall will be closed and we will not operate food bank, homeless breakfast, prayer space or be available to offer practical and pastoral support.



Sunday 9 th August	Carl and Heather
Sunday 16 th August	Guest
Sunday 23 rd August	Carl and Heather
Sunday 30 th August	Guest

The church at home newsletter will be published 1st, 8th and 22nd August.



Hear the TC Commissioner Anthony Cotterill this week talk of the great price Jesus paid for us.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iXifmQSE1eM>



Listen again to your favourite Salvation Army melodies on Fortress Radio. **Every day** from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm we broadcast Salvation Army. Check out the

schedules for more details.

<https://www.fortressradio.online/listen-now.html>



"Clear lots of ground for your tents! Make your tents large. Spread out! Think big! Use plenty of rope, drive the tent pegs deep. Isaiah 54:2

Will you read this verse and pray this prayer regularly?

The God of heaven Himself will help us succeed; therefore, we will arise and build! We will trust His Word and believe in the Sovereign Lord who always keeps His promises. Nehemiah 2:20

Father, we thank You for Your faithful love for us that never ends and Your mercy which never ceases. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. Lord, You are God. You created the heavens and earth and put everything in place. You made the world to be lived in, not to be a place of empty chaos. You are the Lord and there is no other. You publicly proclaim bold promises; You do not whisper obscurities in dark corners. We thank You for giving us the vision to build. We pray for the permission and the resources for us to build. Thank You, Father, for being a wall of fire and protection around our corps, our families and our community and all those involved in the planning of this new building.

Maggie is available with the constant prayer line where you can call or text for prayer. You can contact her on 07840 753 603

Daily Hope offers music, prayers and reflections as well as full worship services from the Church of England at the end of a telephone line.



Sunday on the BBC:

Sunday Worship – Radio 4 – 8.10am Encountering God in abandonment The Rev Dr Isabelle Hamley, Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury charts her walk with God and with Covid-19. In a recent Thought for the Day on Radio 4 Dr Hamley spelt out the devastating effects Covid-19 has had on her

personally, an early sufferer from the disease, referring to the biblical book of Job. "Job goes from being incredibly fortunate to losing everything, his wealth his loved ones, his health." Job's friends were "explaining away what happened, finding meaning in Job's continued plague, even blaming him." But the bible is deeply realistic. His friends are fighting their own battle with fear. Job is fighting with meaninglessness and trauma. "Job never finds out why he suffered. Instead he meets God face to face and finds solace in his presence." In this programme the Archbishop's chaplain will bring other portions of scripture to bear as they relate to wider suffering across the world. What can people of faith and none draw from ancient spiritual wisdom as the world faces a pandemic unprecedented in recent human memory?

Songs of Praise – BBC 1 – 13.15 - Faith and Sport

Aled Jones visits the London Stadium to explore the links between Christianity and sport and looks back at the unforgettable moments of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games that took place in the stadium.

Birthdays

Mel	Tuesday 4 th August
Matthew Pearce	Thursday 6 th August

Prayers please for

Please continue to pray for Maurice who remains unwell. Pray he will know God's peace at this very challenging time.

For Adrian's sister-in-law's husband – John – very unwell in hospital in Medway

Continue to remember Val, David, Al and Mel's husband Steve.
For Debbie Smith recovering with family after her hospital treatment.
Muriel in isolation in preparation for her operation later in August.
Hazel's son Paul also in isolation before his treatment at QEQM

Prayers for Madeleine and Bernard who attend Maidstone Salvation Army, for themselves, their daughter Marie and grandson Steven. Steven is 20 and has been battling leukaemia for many years. His latest battle is not going so well and urgent prayers are requested for a miracle of healing.



Prayers for the appointment of the new winter shelter manager. The interviews are on Wednesday. Pray for wisdom and guidance.

Prayers for the provision of shelter for this coming winter. The government have said the dormitory style accommodation (i.e. church floors) will not be acceptable during the Covid pandemic.

Prayers at our hall

The hall will be open Monday, Wednesday and Saturday between 10 am and 12 noon (other times by arrangement)

Please call or text to let us know you are coming (where necessary we may ask you to delay your visit to stop overcrowding)

Any question please call or text Carl on 07900497326



We return to the guest contributor next week..... I share instead a summary of a letter from Colonel Lee Graves – Chief Secretary



Office of the Chief Secretary

Colonel Lee Graves
Chief Secretary

Tel: 020 7367 4610

31 July 2020

To: All Officers, Members and Employees of The Salvation Army

Dear friends,

Territorial Operations Board – Coronavirus Impact Update:

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. More than three months have passed since I wrote to you on 17 April about the impact of the coronavirus on our territory. Those were very dark times when more than 3,500 people were testing positive for the virus every day in the UK. Intensive Care Units were full and more than a thousand coronavirus related deaths were reported every day across the territory.

As I explained in my April letter, I chair the Territorial Operations Board. The TOB has agreed it is timely to provide an update on the impact of the coronavirus on The Salvation Army in our territory.

A Time To Give Thanks

While the infection rate is dropping in most places we need to remain vigilant and take warnings of a resurgence of the virus very seriously. We must continue to heed government guidance and work hard to make safety our priority.

We are pleased to report that The Salvation Army has responded superbly throughout the lockdown. Our Lifehouses, Older People's Residences and Safe Houses for survivors of modern slavery remained open throughout the pandemic and provided safe, secure places for thousands of vulnerable people. I thank everyone who has worked so hard to make this possible.

We have seen massive growth in online ministry and mission. Salvation Army worship as well as employment and debt support services are now available online. We are hearing so many encouraging testimonies about people deepening their relationship with Jesus during these days. Corps and centres have also been working tirelessly to provide pastoral care, meals, food parcels and other essential supplies to people who have needed our help. Many staff are working from home. We acknowledge how difficult this can be for people who are balancing child care and other responsibilities with work commitments as well as those feeling very isolated during this time. Thank you everyone for all your hard work, tenacity, compassion and willingness to go the extra mile.

Finances

In my April letter, I explained the financial challenges facing the territory. I am pleased to report that we have also made good progress in this respect. We must however, continue to consider the impact the lockdown has had and the gradual easing of restrictions continues to have upon our temporal resources. First, we thank all of you who have made personal financial sacrifices to support The Salvation Army. We also

recognise the sacrifice made by employees who have been furloughed and officers and employees who were in a position to be able to join them by donating a significant amount of their allowance or salary back to the Army. Thank you.

The general public has also responded very generously to our requests for donations. It has been particularly encouraging to see local corps fundraising activities bring in more than £800,000 for COVID work. In addition to this, the THQ fundraising team has raised more than £3.7 million. It is so affirming to know that so many people love The Salvation Army and want to help us to help others.

We cannot be complacent and assume life will return to what it was before the pandemic. The coronavirus will be a risk for the foreseeable future and the economic forecasts are very gloomy. People are going to need our help. There will be many opportunities to present the good news of Jesus in our words, actions and attitudes. Therefore, every part of The Salvation Army needs to examine itself carefully to ensure we maximise our income and review all expenditure.

Moving Forward

As we continue to move forward, we need carefully to monitor our income and expenditures. While the financial results for the first quarter for the year ending 2020-21 have been more favourable than we anticipated the full impact of the lockdown is just beginning to be realised. In the next three months we will begin to see the impact of our Charity Shops not returning to full strength. Our financial obligations will continue to take hold as rent holidays come to an end. The reality of lost revenues from external renters in our Corps buildings will begin to be noticed. Increased costs will begin to show as we begin to come to the end of government schemes such as the furlough initiative.

Importantly it must be recognised that we are unable to ascertain at this point what the coronavirus impact will be upon our ability to raise funds in the important weeks when carolling will be undertaken. Currently we are anticipating raising £1,606,754 but of course, this could be at risk. We know that our literature sales, forecasted to be in the range of £1,586,670, have been severely hindered. Our THQ Christmas fundraising appeal result, critically important to our annual income generation, remains unknown to us. Only as we progress through the balance of this current fiscal period will we truly understand the impact of the coronavirus upon our financial resources.

We sense God is encouraging us to be confident but not complacent. The Salvation Army across the territory is well placed to meet challenges. We have many fine people, at all levels of the Army, who are seeing new opportunities and are determined to move forward. Let's encourage each other and be optimists for as Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me'. (Philippians 4: 13 NJKV)

If you have questions or comments, please write to me at THQ or send me an email at chief.secretary@salvationarmy.org.uk and I will ensure you that I or the appropriate person responds to you.

May God continue to bless and guide us.

Yours faithfully,

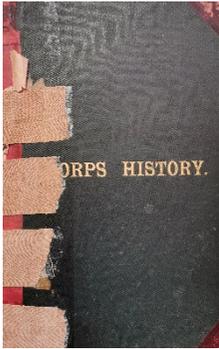


Colonel Lee Graves
CHIEF SECRETARY

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Christian Church and registered charity

The Salvation Army Registered Charity No. 21-4779 and in Scotland SC009359; Social Trust Registered Charity No. 215174 and in Scotland SC037691
Republic of Ireland Registered Charity No. CHY6399; Guernsey Registered Charity No. CH18; Jersey NPO0840; Isle of Man Registered Charity No. 267
The Salvation Army Trustee Company, registered number 00259322 (England and Wales). Registered office: 101 Newington Causeway, London SE1 6BN
General: Brian Peddie Territorial Commander for the United Kingdom with the Republic of Ireland: Commissioner Anthony Cotterill.



We begin with the 6th and 7th July 1957, which was the Young People's Anniversary Weekend. We began this weekend with a fine programme presented on the Saturday evening, with worship presented by the Young People and the Band. This event was spectacular in that it was the first time the Singing Company performed, having been formed only a short time earlier. Worship was given by sister Kit Standley, and sister M Taylor. The commissioning for the worship section was one of the highlights of the weekend itself. The Saturday evening

programmed was concluded with a demonstration, performed by four of our Young People, which was titled "The Faded Letter". The overseer of this event, Lt Col Hollis, took the chair on this occasion.

(Colonel Hollis was previously corps officer at Ramsgate and retired to the corps. He composed the tune Ramsgate – to which we sing the words by Charles Wesley – O disclose thy lovely face. The tune was published in The Musical Salvationist in April 1939.)

Senior Major and Mrs Percy Standley conducted our Sunday meetings, on the 7th July. They had recently returned from a trip to Hong Kong, and Major Standley took the chair for the afternoon meeting at which the Young People gave another performance.

The following weekend, on the 14th July, the Divisional Commander and his wife, conducted meetings this day. It is noted down that blessings came to all in these meetings, and came in forms of visiting comrades, and friends of the Corps who either came to the Mercy Seat, or were given the chance to testify.

We end on the week of 23rd to 29th July, where a Senior Major W. Straw, as the National Campaigner, conducted the meetings. This was a time when we had three daily meetings on the beach, and our weekend meetings were held at the Corps itself. All the meetings held this week were "reasonably well attended", by our own Corps family, however it is noted that it was difficult at this time to get people not "belonging to us" into the Hall. This was not to dull or even lessen the glorious events that happened during the weekend meetings on this week, as two out of three Comrades took an amazing step and rededicated their lives to God.

Blessings to you all! Hollie

David Richard provided some more lovely photos and a short explanation- but sadly I cannot find the scans I made of them – so we will return to his fascinating history of Ramsgate next week.

Children’s Church Challenge

To make something that shows that God Loves Everyone



Well done to Lana, Matthew and Leah

Monday 3rd August The Battle's Over. Really.

Romans 6:1–11

For twenty-nine years after World War II ended, Hiroo Onoda hid in the jungle, refusing to believe his country had surrendered. Japanese military leaders had dispatched Onoda to a remote island in the Philippines (Lubang) with orders to spy on the Allied forces. Long after a peace treaty had been signed and hostilities ceased, Onoda remained in the wilderness. In 1974, Onoda's commanding officer travelled to the island to find him and convince him the war was over.

For three decades, Onoda lived a meagre, isolated existence, because he refused to surrender—refused to believe the conflict was done. We can make a similar mistake. Paul proclaims the stunning truth that “all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death” (Romans 6:3). On the cross, in a powerful, mysterious way, Jesus put to death Satan's lies, death's terror, and sin's tenacious grip. Though we're “dead to sin” and “alive to God” (v. 11), we often live as though evil still holds the power. We yield to temptation, succumbing to sin's seduction. We listen to lies, failing to trust Jesus. But we don't have to yield. We don't have to live in a false narrative. By God's grace we can embrace the true story of Christ's victory.

While we'll still wrestle with sin, liberation comes as we recognize that Jesus has already won the battle. May we live out that truth in His power.

Reflect & Pray

How are you tempted to believe that death and sin still hold power over your life? Where can you see Christ's victory already present in the world?

Jesus, I know You've won the battle over evil and darkness. Would You help me to live this out?

Tuesday 4th August. God's Mercy at Work

1 Samuel 24:1–10

My anger percolated when a woman mistreated me, blamed me, and gossiped about me. I wanted everyone to know what she'd done—wanted her to suffer as I'd suffered because of her behaviour. I steamed with resentment until a headache pierced my temples. But as I began praying for my pain to go away, the Holy Spirit convicted me. How could I plot revenge while begging God for relief? If I believed He would care for me, why wouldn't I trust Him to handle this situation? Knowing that people who are hurting often hurt other people, I asked God to help me forgive the woman and work toward reconciliation.

The psalmist David understood the difficulty of trusting God while enduring unfair treatment. Though David did his best to be a loving servant, King Saul succumbed to jealousy and wanted to murder him (1 Samuel 24:1–2). David suffered while God worked things out and prepared him to take the throne, but still he chose to honour God instead of seeking revenge (vv. 3–7). He did his part to reconcile with Saul and left the results in God's hands (vv. 8–22).

When it seems others are getting away with wrongdoing, we struggle with the injustice. But with God's mercy at work in our hearts and the hearts of others, we can forgive as He's forgiven us and receive the blessings He's prepared for us.

Reflect & Pray

How can trusting that God is perfect, loving, good, and in control help you when sin seems to be prevailing? Who do you need to forgive and place in God's mighty and merciful hands?

Merciful God, please help me trust You to determine how justice prevails.

Friday 7th August Letting Go

John 11:21–36

“Your father is actively dying,” said the hospice nurse. “Actively dying” refers to the final phase of the dying process and was a new term to me, one that felt strangely like traveling down a lonely one-way street. On my dad’s last day, not knowing if he could still hear us, my sister and I sat by his bed. We kissed the top of his beautiful bald head. We whispered God’s promises to him. We sang “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” and quoted the 23rd Psalm. We told him we loved him and thanked him for being our dad. We knew his heart longed to be with Jesus, and we told him he could go. Speaking those words was the first painful step in letting go. A few minutes later, our dad was joyously welcomed into his eternal home.

The final release of a loved one is painful. Even Jesus’ tears flowed when His good friend Lazarus died (John 11:35). But because of God’s promises, we have hope beyond physical death. Psalm 116:15 says that God’s “faithful servants”—those who belong to Him—are “precious” to Him. Though they die, they’ll be alive again.

Jesus promises, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die” (John 11:25–26). What comfort it brings to know we’ll be in God’s presence forever.

Reflect & Pray

What did Jesus accomplish by His death on the cross? How does His sacrifice affect every person who has ever lived?

Precious Father, thank You for the promise of eternal life in Your presence.

For help in dealing with loss, read [Life After Loss at discoveryseries.org/cb131](http://LifeAfterLoss.atdiscoveryseries.org/cb131).

Saturday 8th August. His Death Brings Life

2 Corinthians 5:14–21

During her ministry to men incarcerated in South Africa’s most violent prison, Joanna Flanders-Thomas witnessed the power of Christ to transform hearts. In *Vanishing Grace*, Philip Yancey describes her experience: “Joanna started visiting prisoners daily, bringing them a simple gospel message of forgiveness and reconciliation. She earned their trust, got them to talk about their abusive childhoods, and showed them a better way of resolving conflicts. The year before her visits began, the prison recorded 279 acts of violence against inmates and guards; the next year there were two.”

The apostle Paul wrote, “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17). While we may not always see that newness expressed as dramatically as Flanders-Thomas did, the gospel’s power to transform is the greatest hope-providing force in the universe. New creations. What an amazing thought! The death of Jesus launches us on a journey of becoming like Him—a journey that will culminate when we see Him face-to-face (see 1 John 3:1–3).

As believers in Jesus we celebrate our life as new creations. Yet we must never lose sight of what that cost Christ. His death brings us life. “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Reflect & Pray

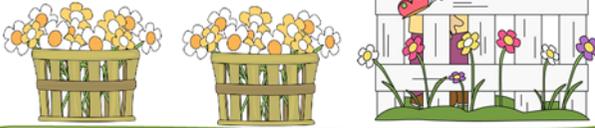
How has Jesus’ transforming work been evidenced in your life? What areas of your life are still in need of that “new creation” impact?

Loving Father, thank You that, because of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, I am a new creation. Forgive me for the times I return to the old things that need to pass away.

From Major John How does your garden grow?

Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary

Mary, Mary, quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With silver bells, and cockle shells,
And pretty maids all in a row.



On one of our walks round the fields we walk alongside some allotments and the above nursery rhyme came to mind as I looked at the different allotments. Some are picture to look at.

Beautifully kept, regimented lines of different vegetables, grass footpaths between the beds, mowed and edged. Some have flowers as well, dahlias and sunflowers etc. On one such allotment I saw the gardener on his knees between the rows taking out any weeds. (On his knees, there is a sermon there!)

Other allotments are obviously cared for but not to the same extent. Then others are neglected and are not tended at all and grasses and weeds are taking over.

Spiritualising it, it made me think, how is my spiritual life, my Christian experience? Which allotment, which garden is it like?

How does your garden grow?

Time to Smile

While out one day, two men came across an old abandoned well. Curious to know how deep it was, they threw a stone down the well and waited to hear the sound of it hitting the bottom. No sound was heard. They found a larger rock and threw that down. Still they heard no sound.

They searched for something bigger and found a railway sleeper. With great effort they managed to carry the heavy sleeper across to the well and dropped it down the well. As they stood back waiting to hear it hit the bottom, a goat suddenly darted between them and disappeared down the open well.

The two men were still recovering from the shock when a farmer appeared. Have either of you seen a goat? He asked them. 'Yes' they said. 'One has jumped down this well.' 'No, that couldn't have been my goat,' said the farmer. 'My goat was tethered to a railway sleeper.'

An Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman were walking through a field when they saw a cow. 'That's an English cow,' said the Englishman. 'No' said the Irishman, that's an Irish cow.' 'Both of you are wrong' said the Scotsman, 'It's a Scottish cow, look, it's got bagpipes underneath.'

Comic Dictionary

Accordion – bagpipes with pleats.

Adult – Someone who has stopped growing at both ends and started growing in the middle.

Afternoon – The part of the day spent wondering where the morning went.

Archaeologist – Someone whose career is in ruins.

Baldness – When you have less hair to comb and more face to wash.

Dermatologist – One who makes rash judgements.

Quiz

- 1.Machu Picchu is in which mountain range?
- 2.Canary Wharf is in which London development?
- 3.The Cheviot hills run along the boundary between which countries.
- 4.What characters were created by Roger Hargreaves?
- 5.To which flower family does garlic belong?

The 60's Pop

- 1.What was over for the Seekers in their 1965 UK No.1 hit?
- 2.What was the Beach Boy's first No.1 hit in Britain?
- 3.Which 'Opportunity Knocks' star had a hit with 'Those were the Days'?
- 4.Which group were 'Glad all over' in their No.1 hit in 1963?
- 5.What was 'skipped' in the lyrics of 'Whiter Shade of Pale'?

Anagram

What is the only English anagram of EXCITATION



This week we say thank you to Asda – next door - for their donation of fresh fruit and vegetables for our food bank.

Answers
1.The Andes. 2.Docklands. 3.England and Scotland.
4.Mr Men. 5.Lily.
60's Pop
1.Carnival. 2.Good Vibrations. 3.Mary Hopkin. 4.Dave
Clark Five. 5.Light Fandango.
The only English anagram of EXCITATION is INTOXICATE.

Worship at home 2nd August 2020

Whether through printed word, or through the gift of technology
we are a community.

Here we seek connection to the Divine.

Come, let us worship God,
shown to us through the risen Christ.

I will sing to the Lord a song of worship. I will lift up my voice in a hymn of
praise. Let the earth and heavens join together in worshipping the Lord our
God, for the trees clap their hands together and mountains lift up their heads
for He alone is worthy of our praise. May the flowers of the forest sing for joy
and may the streams and seas rejoice on every side.

May we together, proclaim the joy of Your salvation to all the people on earth
and declare the glory of Your marvellous majesty to all the nations.

Marvellous are the works of Your hand, for You are the Lord our God, Who
alone is worthy of our worship and praise.

I praise and worship You Father God for Who You are. I thank You that You
are my Saviour and that justice and truth are in Your hands. In Jesus' name,
Amen.

Song 477

Thank you for saving me; what can I say?
You are my everything, I will sing your praise.
You shed your blood for me; what can I say?
You took my sin and shame, a sinner called by name.

Great is the Lord.

Great is the Lord.

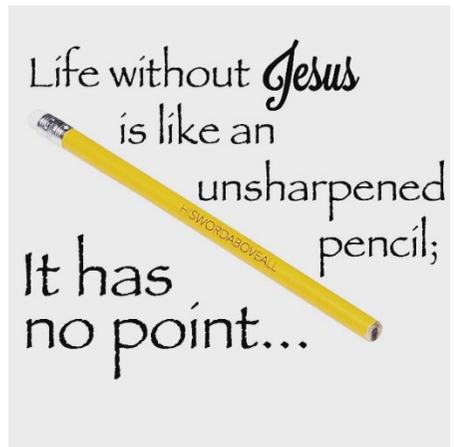
For we know your truth has set us free;
You've set your hope in me.

2 Mercy and grace are mine, forgiven is my sin;

Jesus, my only hope, the Saviour of the world.
'Great is the Lord,' we cry; God, let your Kingdom come.
Your Word has let me see, thank you for saving me.
(After second chorus)

Thank you for saving me; what can I say?
I wonder?

What would my life be like without Christ?



1 Kings 21

SOME TIME LATER there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2Ahab said to Naboth, "Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it

is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth."

3But Naboth replied, "The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers."

4So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat.

5His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, "Why are you so sullen? Why won't you eat?"

6He answered her, "Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, 'Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'"

7Jezebel his wife said, "Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

8So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city with him. 9In those letters she wrote: "Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. 10But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them testify that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death."

11So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them. 12They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. 13Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, "Naboth has cursed both God and the king." So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death. 14Then they sent word to Jezebel: "Naboth has been stoned and is dead."

15As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead." 16When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.

17Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: 18"Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. 19Say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' Then say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood — yes, yours!' "

20Ahab said to Elijah, "So you have found me, my enemy!"

"I have found you," he answered, "because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD. 21'I am going to bring disaster on you. I will consume your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel — slave or free. 22I will make your house like that of Jeroboam son of Nebat and that of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin.'

23"And also concerning Jezebel the LORD says: 'Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.'

24"Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds of the air will feed on those who die in the country."

25(There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife. 26He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel.)

27When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly.

28Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: 29"Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son."

Song 279

To God be the glory, great things he hath done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son;
Who yielded his life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!
O come to the Father through Jesus the Son,
And give him the glory; great things he hath done!

*(After last chorus)
Great things he hath done!

2 O perfect redemption, the purchase of blood!
To every believer the promise of God;
The vilest offender who truly believes,
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

3 Great things he hath taught us, great things he hath done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son;
But purer and higher and greater will be
Our wonder, our rapture, when Jesus we see.

Fanny Crosby (1820-1915)

Prayers

Gracious God, in the busy-ness of my day, I sometimes forget to stop to thank you for all that is good in my life.

My blessings are many and my heart is filled with gratefulness for the gift of living, for the ability to love and be loved, for the opportunity to see the everyday wonders of creation, for sleep and water, for a mind that thinks and a body that feels.

I thank you, too, for those things in my life that are less than I would hope them to be. Things that seem challenging, unfair, or difficult. When my heart feels stretched and empty, and pools of tears form in my weary eyes, still I rejoice that you are as near to me as my next breath and that in the midst of turbulence, I am growing and learning.

In the silence of my soul, I thank you most of all for your unconditional and eternal love.

Amen

Thank you, Lord, for the blessings you have bestowed on my life. You have provided me with more than I could ever have imagined. You have surrounded me with people who always look out for me. You have given me family and friends who bless me every day with kind words and actions. They lift me up in ways that keep my eyes focused on you and make my spirit soar. Also, thank you, Lord, for keeping me safe. You protect me from those things that seem to haunt others. You help me make better choices, and you have provided me with advisors that help me with the difficult decisions. You speak to me in so many ways so that I always know you are here.

And Lord, I am so grateful for keeping those around me safe and loved. I hope that you provide me with the ability and sense to show them every day how much they matter. I hope that you give me the ability to give to them the same kindness they have provided to me. I am just so grateful for all of your blessings in my life, Lord. I pray that you remind me of just how lucky I am, and that you never allow me to forget to show my gratitude in prayer and returned kind acts. Thank you, Lord. In your name, Amen.

For those on ZOOM we will look at a short TV advert.

We will see a group of children gathered in a circle with a man asking them questions. The questions are always simple and seemingly straight forward, yet the children give wandering, sometimes illogical, and somewhat incoherent responses.



The man guiding the conversation asks: “Who thinks **more** is better than **less**?” The children in the circle raise their hands. Then the man says, “Okay. Why?” One girl answers, “More is better than less because if stuff is not less (deep breath). If there’s more less stuff (breath) then you might, you might wanna have some more and your parents just don’t let you because there’s only a little. But we want more, we want more like (breath) you really like it. You want more.”

The man who has been listening encouragingly along the way, concludes, “Right. I follow you.” Then a voice comes over the scene saying,

“It’s not complicated. More is better.”

It’s not complicated. Even if like the young girl in the TV advert, we can’t quite explain it coherently, we’ve all learned and know that more is better. Maybe it’s human nature, maybe it’s a sort of evolutionary survival of the fittest mentality, but from our very earliest days we desire, long for, crave, even covet more. To some extent, our need for more keeps us alive; it is what makes us human. We are not self---sufficient and self---sustaining; we are people who need more to live: more food, more breath, more water. Yet, from our very earliest days, this need for more that is part of being creation rather than the creator turns in upon itself to reveal our separation from the creator. More becomes about adding to what we already have, about accumulating extra. More is to be desired, sought after, and pursued at all costs. Or as a credit card add I saw recently said, “More is always better.”

It's not complicated. More is better. Or is it? Our Old Testament lesson for today is a story about wanting more. It's a story about individuals, about community, and about God.

The story of Naboth's vineyard is about individuals with wants, desires, choices, and moral and religious convictions. It is a story about communities with guidelines and laws, with ways of enforcing these to the benefit of some and the detriment of others, and with stories the community tells itself about what is right and good and wrong and evil. This story is about God and the way God relates to people who are sinful and righteous.

Though our reading today doesn't give us the full background, we already know from the book of 1 Kings that King Ahab was an immoral king who in his twenty--two years as king did "evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him" (1 Kings 16:30). At the beginning of our reading, King Ahab sees a lush, fruitful vineyard in Jezreel near his house and approaches the man who owns it to make a deal. The faithful Naboth refuses to trade or sell his land because of the inheritance laws of God. With Naboth evoking the LORD's mandate, Ahab goes away sad, resentful, angry, and pouty. Like a child who didn't get his way, Ahab sulked and groaned until his wife noticed. Maybe we can hear these words on the lips of Ahab. "More is better than less because if stuff is not less. If there's more less stuff, then you might, you might want to have some more... But I want more, I want more like, I really like it. I want more."

Jezebel reminds Ahab of his powerful position and devises an elaborate plan to get Naboth's vineyard for the king. Through a labyrinth of lies and deceitful scheming Jezebel and her scoundrels have Naboth unjustly put to death and dispossessed of his vineyard. When Ahab seeks to claim the newly available land, he meets the prophet Elijah who carries with him the judgment of the LORD.

Song 998

Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair,
Lord, in your suffering world this is our prayer.
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace,
Sunrise to sunset your Kingdom increase!

2 Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills,
Work for the craftsmen, trade for their skills.
Land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak,
Voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor, friend of the weak,
Give us compassion we pray.
Melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain;
Come, change our love from a spark to a flame.*

3 Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear,
Cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share.
Peace to the killing fields, scorched earth to green,
Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.

4 Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams
Plundered and poisoned - our future, our dreams.
Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed;
Make us content with the things that we need.

Chorus

5 Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame
Until your justice burns brightly again;
Until the nations learn of your ways,
Seek your salvation and bring you their praise.

Chorus

Graham Kendrick

You might ask “This is all very interesting history, but what value does such a sordid tale have for us today?”

There are some really important lessons for us to learn from this:

Don't get caught up in small offenses

If Ahab had just maintained proper perspective, none of this would have happened. In the same way, when we get caught up in small issues we end up doing damage beyond all proportion to the issue itself.

It didn't feel like a small thing to Ahab though. He was very frustrated and upset, to the point where he wouldn't even eat. He needed help to see the issue more clearly, and that leads to the second point...

Surround yourself with godly influences

Ahab needed a queen who would say "Naboth is just doing what the law of God says He can't sell you that field. Perhaps he would be willing to rent it to you, or perhaps there is another plot of ground we can use. Why don't we go and look at some other options?"

I was reading an article from a doctor who was helping an elderly man who struggled with a harsh temper. Over many years he had developed the habit of shouting at family members – including young grandchildren – over really small issues. One time he admitted that he had yelled and said some very unkind things to his grandchildren because they were being too noisy in the house. That was fine while he was enjoying playing with them, but when he was trying to read or watch TV for example it was annoying, and he had let fly at them. He knew it was wrong, and he was very frustrated at himself for doing it yet again. He knew that his relationship with his family was greatly damaged by this behaviour.

The doctor asked him to close his eyes and recall the scene and what happened, so they could talk about it. The man did so, and then opened his eyes again when the counsellor asked him to. He was shocked to see the doctor sitting in front of him wearing a clown nose, and he burst out laughing. The counsellor then gave him the clown nose and told him to put it on whenever he felt himself getting angry about silly things. That might sound silly, but it really helped this man remember to keep perspective and not allow himself to get worked up over small things. We need people who can help us keep things in proper perspective.

Instead, Ahab had a wife who indulged his selfish desires and who had no moral qualms about doing whatever it took to get her own way. Verse 25 tells us that there was “never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel his wife”. What sort of man might he have been if he had accepted the advice and help of godly people instead of wicked? Unfortunately, he considered God’s prophets as enemies because they told him what he did not want to hear. It’s too easy to tell people what they want to hear, and it’s too easy to surround ourselves with people who will agree with us, indulge us or lead us in wrong directions. We need to be discerning enough to surround ourselves with godly influences.

Why Complain?

Complaining spreads conflict. I have seen many examples where people have acted just like Ahab in this story. They complain to others because of the hurt or frustration they feel, but in doing so they unleash a series of events that end in catastrophe.

I have seen people harbour grudges and have low opinions of others, not because of any first-hand experience, but because they have listened to the complaints of other people. Love and unity are compromised because of a habit of indulging complainers. We think that we are caring for people in allowing them to share their hurts, but in actual fact we are very often keeping people bound up in immaturity and sinfulness.

As listeners, we need to discern how to listen in order to understand and care for people, not just indulge people. We need to ask questions and make suggestions that help people to apply God’s truth, and if they do not know that truth, we need to be able to show them from God’s Word.

As speakers, we need to be able to be honest about how we feel and what we think, but at the same time exercise self control. Words cannot be taken back, so we must make sure that we don’t say things that are not loving toward God and others – that is the most basic rule of the Christian life.

James 3:5 says

Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.

Our words can do a great deal of damage. Regardless of what we are feeling, we need to be responsible with what we say. We must not indulge a habit of people speaking carelessly of their effect on their hearers or on themselves. Complaining only ever produces conflict.

Beware those who twist the truth

We naturally bend the truth to suit our own desires and indulge our own feelings. The sad thing is, most often people believe the lies they tell themselves, and their lives become based on those lies instead of on the truth.

Jezebel twisted God's laws in order to get her own way. People still do that today. We also twist stories of things that have happened to us or to others. We make assumptions about the hidden motives of other people's hearts, when only God knows the truth of that.

Just because you know someone well doesn't mean that you should believe everything they say. Just because you love someone doesn't mean you should believe everything they say. Just because you trust someone doesn't mean you should believe everything they say.

That might sound harsh, but it's true. None of us are perfect, and we all make mistakes in what we assume, what we perceive, what we remember and so on.

Each of us needs to weigh things up according to the leading of the Holy Spirit and the standard of the Word of God.

Let me give you an example of what I mean...

I recently had a conversation with a friend who was struggling to work with others. The natural thing for me to do was to sympathise with him and feel resentful about the people who were giving him a hard time. The godly thing to do was to make no judgement at all about those other people – I am not in the situation where I should do that. The fact is that if I judged them because of what my friend told me, I would be judging them completely unfairly. I do

not know the full story, I cannot know the full story and I do not need to know the full story of who they are and what they are doing.

I am in the situation of needing to care for my friend, so what I need to do is listen and seek to understand what he is going through. Then I need to seek opportunities to speak the truth in love – are there suggestions I can make that will help him pursue better understanding and maturity within his team? Are there personal issues that I as a friend can point out to him that are hindering him from working well with those others and enjoying a good relationship with them? Is it simply the comfort of having someone who understands what it's like that will encourage him? Do I need to divert him from the struggles and get him to focus on all the good things that he sees God doing in and through the team?

It's easy to accept only one side of a story or see things from only one point of view. I have seen it so many times, where people pass on information and opinions about others that are simply hearsay. They pass these things on because it makes them feel knowledgeable and superior, but it is of no value to the hearer and only promotes ignorance. We need to pursue wisdom.

Don't blame others

Can Ahab himself say – well it wasn't me, it was her. She did it. She forged a letter which led to his death. There is a scapegoat. Does that remove our complicity? Or can the elders of Jezreel, say well we were just following orders of the King, albeit forged orders of the king? When do you actually begin to object to ruthless and powerful behaviour. Do you just prevaricate and take the quiet life.

Again, and again it has been seen that it is when good people do not object – say to racism shown towards asylum seekers – that wickedness and tyranny is allowed to prosper. Homelessness, support for those with addictions, human trafficking, care for the elderly and those alone,

Pastor Niemoller, a leading Christian opponent to Nazism, originally supported the rise of Hitler. His famous quote is still chilling today.

When the Nazis came for the communists,

I remained silent;
I was not a communist.
When they locked up the social democrats,
I remained silent;
I was not a social democrat.
When they came for the trade unionists,
I did not speak out;
I was not a trade unionist.
When they came for the Jews,
I remained silent;
I wasn't a Jew.
When they came for me,
there was no one left to speak out.

Yes, this a story of the abuse of power, but do the manipulations and duplicity absolve us from speaking out. It didn't stop Elijah – and Ahab immediately knew he had done wrong.

How do we cope with those who manipulate or make it very difficult to say no?

What is the role of conscience here?

Related to the above – we really need to explore what is this forgiveness that Ahab received. Having been confronted by Elijah, “Ahab tore his clothes, wore sackcloth’ and generally went around as a penitent. Is that sufficient? Is that all we need to do? What about Naboth’s family who don’t have Naboth around any more, he is dead; or what about their ancestral land? Is that just?

There is a real challenge when it comes to forgiveness.

We know of stories from churches. The offending church leader has confessed and been forgiven.....but still continues in his role, while his victims languish and are forgotten about.

Is that forgiveness?

Is that God’s love?

Is that what has happened to Ahab? Is this just “cheap grace”?

What about people who have hurt you. They ask for forgiveness – and hard as it is – you offer it. Yet they hurt you again. They don’t seem to have changed at all.

And what about us? Do we say sorry, but it makes no difference to the way to act?

Grace without the repentance – the complete conversion, turning around of a person’s life; is it love without the justice? Do the sins of the father’s and their fathers end in the cross of Christ – if today people are still suffering because of those ancient injustices from which we benefit?

Something is just not right here in this story – jarring. Yes there is the violence that will continue till the next generations. . . and we have trouble with that. But there seems to be no response from Ahab, other than his conscience is sprung into action and the enormity of his sins are revealed and challenged. There is here no words of Christ to the rich young ruler – go and sell all that you have and give to the poor; or the response of Zaccheus in his encounter with Jesus to repay fourfold those whom he had defrauded. Grace is grace – but not to be cheapened.

Cast your mind back to when we looked at Jonah. Although Nineveh was wicked – God forgave them. Jonah sulked and God challenged him by claiming he cared more for a tree than a city of 100 000.

We don’t see that in Elijah – but would he too have felt anguish that such a man was not punished at that moment?

We will sing this song shortly

There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in his justice,
which is more than liberty.
There is welcome for the sinner,
and more graces for the good;
there is mercy with the Saviour;

there is healing in his blood.

There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more felt than in heaven;
there is no place where earth's failings
have such kind judgment given.

There is plentiful redemption
in the blood that has been shed;
there is joy for all the members
in the sorrows of the Head.

For the love of God is broader
than the measure of man's mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.

If our love were but more faithful,
we should take him at his word;
and our life would be thanksgiving
for the goodness of the Lord.

And central to our faith is Grace – and the words powerfully remind us that
no one is beyond the love and forgiveness of God

But it can never be cheap grace. We must repent – be truly sorry – and allow
God to turn us around – replying upon His spirit to renew us.

And we avoid cheap grace by focussing on these 5 pointers that will help us to
avoid going down the same tragic path that Ahab followed with tragic
consequences for those he abused, those who indulged him and led him
astray, himself and his family.

- Don't get caught up in small offences
- Surround yourself with godly influences
- Why Complain
- Beware those who twist the truth
- Don't blame others

Song 699

Every promise we can make,
Every prayer and step of faith,
Every difference we can make
Is only by his grace.

Every mountain we will climb,
Every ray of hope we shine,
Every blessing left behind
Is only by his grace.

*Grace alone which God supplies,
Strength unknown he will provide.
Christ in us, our cornerstone,
We will go forth in grace alone.*

2 Every soul we long to reach,
Every heart we hope to teach,
Everywhere we share his peace
Is only by his grace.
Every loving word we say,
Every tear we wipe away,
Is only by his grace.

Scott Wesley Brown and Jeff Nelson

May the peace of God enfold us,
The love of God uphold us,
The wisdom of God control us.
Amen



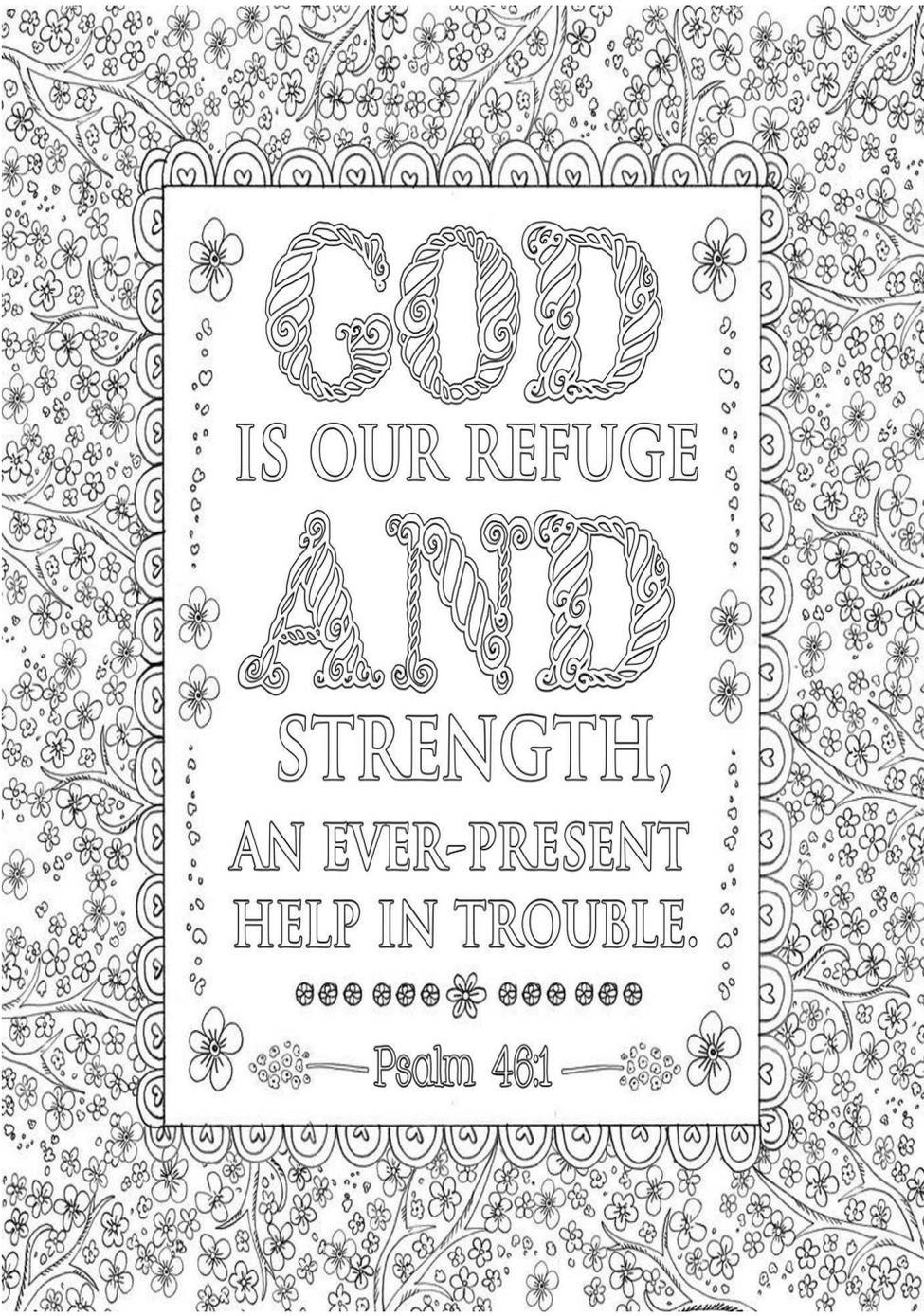
Luke 15:10



Jesus
said
'there is
rejoicing
in the

presence
of the
angels
of God
over

one
sinner
who
repents.'



GOD
IS OUR REFUGE
AND
STRENGTH,
AN EVER-PRESENT
HELP IN TROUBLE.

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— Psalm 46:1 —