

FULLY RECHARGED FOR 2023



INTRODUCTION

How have you experienced the first 2 weeks of 2023? And how do you feel about the journey that is ahead for the remaining 50 weeks of the year? I am sure that in our church there will be a wide range of answers to both questions.

For our family, it took several years to adjust to the start of a year in the northern hemisphere. We moved to the Isle of Man in 2015 and it was certainly a big adjustment to start 2016 in a wet, windy, cold, and dark winter and then to end the year again in a wet, windy, cold and dark winter. In the southern hemisphere, our years started in a sunny and warm summer and one had the wonderful prospect of ending a challenging year again with a sunny and warm summer holiday. The last three weeks of December and the first week of January is the summer holiday period. It is the time to rest from the past year and recharge for the year ahead.

Now, before you say to me: “well there is a boat in the morning”, we love living in the Isle of Man and this is our home. We are also convinced that this is where the Lord wants us to live and work, not just in business, but more importantly for His Kingdom. The actual question is, are we all fully recharged and ready for the journey of 2023? And are we clear about what journey we are on in 2023?

In today’s lesson, we can draw spiritual energy, valuable reminders, and inspiration for the journey ahead of us in 2023 from the Word of God as brought to us by King David, John the brother of Jesus and the Apostle Paul.

THE SOURCE OF ENERGY

In Psalm 40, King David described how he was in a very bad place. He talked of the pit of destruction and a miry bog in verse 2 and in verse 12 he said: “***for evils have encompassed me beyond number***”. But he did not just describe being in a bad environment, he also recognised his own state of brokenness: “***my iniquities have overtaken me, and I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head; my heart fails me.***”

King David is clearly showing us the importance of being accountable and recognising our own shortcomings and not taking the easy option of blaming God or others for our circumstances.

When we take accountability and understand our sin and shortcomings, we are able to turn fully to the Lord for help. David said: ***“Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust, who does not turn to the proud”***.

I want to encourage you to turn to the Lord this year for everything in your life. Cry to the Lord and wait patiently for Him. In verse 1 King David described how the Lord ***“inclined to me and heard my cry”***.

In the words of King David, we could indeed ask: ***“O Lord make haste to help me!”***. But then we must remain patient and wait for the Lord. The Lord knows what is best for us, what we need and when we need it. We may sometimes feel that the Lord is slow to answer and act, but He is never late! The Lord will surely set our feet on a rock, make our steps secure and put a new song in our mouths. We are also assured that the Lord’s steadfast love and His faithfulness will ever preserve us.

In his writings to the church in Corinth, the Apostle Paul also incorporated the message that the Lord is the true source of spiritual energy for us all. In 1 Cor 1:4 - 8, Paul explained that God in His grace gave us the Lord Jesus Christ and that:

- We are enriched through Jesus in all speech and all knowledge
- We have all the gifts that we need
- We will be sustained by God to the end of our life journey

And, just like King David, Paul assured the church that God is faithful.

Are we clear where our source of energy will come from for the journey ahead in 2023? If we accept God as our true source of energy, are we fully focused and reliant on God or are we still turning to ourselves and to “the proud”?

THE JOURNEY

Now, what is the journey that I keep referring to? Paul wrote in 1 Cor 1:2: ***“To the church of God that is in Corinth [the Isle of Man], called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours”***. And in verse 9: ***“...you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”***

The journey we are on as followers of Jesus, is the journey of sanctification. When we accept through faith the Lord Jesus as our Saviour and repent from our life of sin, we become righteous before God. It is called our justification. This is followed by a life long journey of sanctification and will end with our final glorification, when we are resurrected in a new body and join God in the New Jerusalem for eternity.

Sanctification means that we are set apart from the world to be holy people. To be a saint is to be a holy person, who is dedicated to serve the Lord in all aspects of our lives and to be a follower of Jesus. It does require a 24/7 dedication and is not just for those in full time ministry. Being ***“a saint on Sundays and worldly on weekdays”*** does not work.

Being a saint does not mean that we do not sin. We will continue to fall each day. But it does mean that we turn our faces from the world towards Jesus and strive to live a life away from sin. It means that we repent daily, seek forgiveness of our sins, and also forgive others who have sinned against us.

Michelangelo is believed to have said: “every block of stone has a statue inside it and is the task of the sculptor to discover it”. It is also said that when he was asked how he was able to scalp the 17 ft statue of David from a solid block of marble, he humbly replied: “*I simply chipped away all the bits that didn't look like David*” (however this quote seems to be less reliable and have also been attributed to other sculptors). The journey of sanctification requires us to be open to “daily chipping”. When we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, read the Word of God, and receive loving correction from others, the Lord will chip away at all the bits in our lives that don't look like a saint.

Are you ready and willing for your journey as a saint in 2023? Are you open to the chipping at the hand of the Great Sculptor?

TELL THE GLAD NEWS

Our journey of sanctification is much more than just becoming more holy. It could almost become selfish if that was our only purpose on the journey. King David, John and Paul provided another crucial dimension to our journey.

In Psalm 40, King David emphasised the importance of sharing the good news with others: “*I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as You know, O Lord. I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation*” vs 9 - 10.

When we share the Gospel and our testimonies with others, it brings glory and honour to God. It draws others to God and to faith in our Lord Jesus Christ: “*Many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.*” Vs 3b.

John, the brother of Jesus, recorded the reaction of John the Baptist and his disciple Andrew when they met Jesus for His baptism with water and the Holy Spirit. In John 1:29, John the Baptist said: “*Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*” and in verse 34: “*I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God*”. The next day, John met Jesus again and repeated: “*Behold, the Lamb of God*”. Two of John's disciples then left him and immediately became followers of Jesus. One of them was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He went looking for Simon and said to him: “*We have found the Messiah (which means Christ)*” vs 41.

Are we ready to share the Gospel in the Isle of Man in 2023 and say: “*we have found the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God who takes away your sin and the sin of the world!*”?

Interestingly, King David spoke of “*the great congregation*”. St Paul's reminder of our calling to be saints includes: “*called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the*

name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.” . Our journey is not meant to be exclusive from other churches. Although St Barnabas is a separate Anglican church in the Isle of Man, we must remain clear that we are always part of the united “one church” in the Isle of Man, in Britain, and the entire earth. There may be many “branches” and different denominations, but ultimately there is only One Church with One Head, Jesus Christ.

GREAT IS THE LORD

I hope that we will all be blessed and encouraged by the Lord each day of our journey in 2023. May we all pray to the Lord in the words of King David: *“May all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; may those who love Your salvation say continually: “Great is the Lord!”. As for me, I am poor and needy, but the Lord takes thought of me. You are my help and my deliverer; do not delay, O my God!”.* Ps 40:16-17

AMEN

Collect (Prayer before the readings): Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new; transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ Your Son our Lord, who is alive with You and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Readings: Old Testament: Psalm 40:1-17

New Testament: 1 Cor 1:1 - 9

Gospel: John 1:29 - 42

Hymns:

1. 413 (Common Praise): Eternal Father Strong to Save
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDjwUzUnNpU>
2. 1086 (Mission Praise): Light of the World
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYsR49ReAj4>
3. 799 (Mission Praise): All I once held dear
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oxpPIa-BskY>
4. 519 (Common Praise): Make me a channel of Your peace
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2svZhZT6Pro>