

Sunday, April 24th: 2022

The Bible Readings

The Old Testament Reading: Psalm 34:11-22

The Reading from the Epistles: 1 John 4:7-21

The Gospel Reading: Luke 12:22-34

The Hymns

- 1: *As sinners saved, we gladly praise*
- 2: *All things bright and beautiful*
- 3: *More about Jesus would I know*
- 4: *Through all the changing scenes of life*

1: *As Sinners Saved, We Gladly Praise*

1: *As sinners saved we gladly praise*
The Author of redeeming grace;
O God, 'tis Thine almighty power
Secures us when the tempests lower.

2: *Thy love's a refuge ever nigh,*
Thy watchfulness, a mountain high,
Thy Name's a rock that stands above,
That waves below can never move.

3: *Thy faithfulness for ever sure;*
Through endless ages shall endure;
Thy perfect work shall ever prove
The depth of Thine unceasing love.

4: *While all things change, Thou changest not,*
Forgetting ne'er, though oft forgot;
Thy love, immutably the same,
Displays the glory of Thy name.

5: *With gratitude rejoice and praise*
The Source of this abundant grace;
Dear God, Thine everlasting power

Will keep us safe in danger's hour!

James Harington Evans, 1785-1859

Few hymn books have carried this hymn. The author was originally an Anglican clergyman, and was a minister at Salisbury Cathedral. After 1815, he became a Baptist Minister at Gray's Inn Road, London, having become uneasy about certain points of Anglican doctrine. This change caused some controversy. The original has been slightly altered.

2: All Things Bright and Beautiful

He hath made every thing beautiful in his time...

[Ecclesiastes 11:3a]

1: *All things bright and beautiful,*

All creatures great and small,

All things wise and wonderful,

The Lord God made them all.

2: *Each little flower that opens,*

Each little bird that sings,

He made their glowing colours,

He made their tiny wings.

3: *The purple-headed mountain,*

The river running by,

The sunset, and the morning

That brightens up the sky.

4: *The cold wind in the*

winter,

The pleasant summer sun,

The ripe fruits in the garden,

He made them every one.

5: *The tall trees in the*

greenwood,

The meadows where we play,

The rushes by the water

We gather every day.

6: *He gave us eyes to see them,*

And lips that we might tell
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well.

Cecil Frances Alexander, 1823-95

First published in *Hymns for Little Children*: 1848

The chorus to this hymn was originally -

*“All things bright and beauteous,
All creatures great and small;
All things wise and wondrous,
The Lord God made them all.”*

The words “beauteous” and “wondrous” were altered at an early date. Verse five is often omitted nowadays. The contention has been that few children play in meadows and that they do not gather rushes. However, that misses the point. The verse is not to be read as describing the norm today; rather it is a statement of, and an aspiration for the innocence of childhood - something that has been lost in this day and generation.

Of all the children’s hymns written in the nineteenth century, this one has been a survivor. In fact, in these days when church attendance is the exception rather than the norm, it has become a particular favourite of those who rarely come to church.

3: More About Jesus Would I Know

Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.

[Hosea 6:3]

1: More about Jesus would I know,
More of His grace to others show,
More of His saving fulness see,
More of His love who died for me.

*More, more about Jesus,
More, more about Jesus,
More of His saving fulness see,
More of His love who died for me.*

2: More about Jesus let me

learn,

More of His holy will discern;
Spirit of God, my Teacher be,
Showing the things of Christ to me.

3: More about Jesus, in His Word,
Holding communion with my Lord;
Hearing His voice in every line,
Making each faithful saying mine.

4: More about Jesus, on His throne,
Riches in glory all His own;
More of His kingdom's sure increase;
More of His coming, Prince of Peace!

Eliza Edmunds Hewitt, 1851-

1920

4: Through All the Changing Scenes of Life

*I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in
my mouth.*

[Psalm 34:1]

1: Through all the changing scenes of life,
In trouble and in joy,
The praises of my God shall still
My heart and tongue employ.

2: Of His deliverance I will boast,
Till all that are distressed
From my example comfort take,
And charm their griefs to rest.

3: O magnify the Lord with me,
With me exalt His name;
When in distress to Him I called,
He to my rescue came.

4: The hosts of God encamp around
The dwellings of the just;
Deliverance He affords to all

Who on His succour trust.

5: O make but trial of His love;
Experience will decide
How blest are they, and only they,
Who in His truth confide.

6: Fear Him, ye saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear;
Make you His service your delight,
Your wants shall be His care.

Nahum Tate, 1652-1715

Nicholas Brady, 1659-1726

[First published in *A New Version of the Psalms of David*, 1696]

The Path to Personal Holiness

Preacher: Mr Peter Murcott

1: The Gracious Summons

*Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of
the Lord.*

[Psalm 34:11]

There is something very gracious about the word “Come” when falling from God’s lips. He who is eternal, almighty, beyond all power and thought, condescends to consider “frail children of dust, / And feeble as frail”,¹ having mercy upon them, because they are but dust, by saying: “Come.”

An Amazing Summons

Without the Divine summons, mysteriously conveyed by the Holy Spirit at His will and good pleasure,² none would ever turn to the Lord for instruction; for the natural man looks more or less anywhere than the Bible for guidance. He wakes, gets up, eats, goes about the day’s business, makes decisions, converses, thinks, watches, reads, listens, and takes notice of virtually anything but the Word of God. Therefore, is it not all the more amazing that the Lord should make rebel sinners first of all willing to listen? He first opens their ears, and then graciously says to them: “Come now, and let us reason together... though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”³

O the wonder of it all! “Come, ye children,” says the God the Holy Spirit, the

Divine Guide into all truth,⁴ “hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord.”

Teachable

Instruction in truth is the destruction of error; and there is certainly no shortage of error around today. Yet here is a remarkable thing: at their conversion, those who were once rebel sinners become teachable. No longer do their hackles rise at the very mention of the word “instruction”. Neither is there any age limit for an admission to God’s school. “What tutor shall we find for a child sixty years old?” someone asked, despairingly. Humanly speaking, you won’t. The lessons of the world will have become too deeply embedded in him – engraved upon the heart with a pen of iron with the point of a diamond.⁵ But this Teacher is no earthly tutor: He is the Spirit of God Himself — sovereign, awesome, mysterious and always effectual. Therefore, since none is too old to turn or to be taught, let each who trusts in Christ obey this gracious and generous command to learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart.⁶

The Focus

Sound teaching consists of clearly marked stages, from the known to the unknown. Too much information simply causes confusion; for there is a mountain of matter in every line of Scripture. So let us focus simply on fear, drawing a distinction between that of the spirit of the age and that of the Lord. Our starting point is this: –

1: *When fear is based upon some worldly consideration, loss or penalty, such fear is*



Servile fear haunts mankind. Proverbs 29:25 puts the matter plainly: “The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe.” That is an essential lesson that every new believer needs to hear; and it is one that every ongoing believer needs to be reminded of regularly.

“Ye are bought with a price, be not the servants of men,” wrote Paul to the Corinthians.⁷ That is very sound advice. It means, do not cringingly capitulate to the corruption of the age. Alas, where God’s Word and the world conflict, all too many conform to the world – if only for a quiet life. That, to say the least, is very

unwise; because once you succumb to one demand, be sure that a worse one will follow!

Nothing New

All this, of course, is nothing new. In the Tudor times, for example, many people altered their religious beliefs with every new monarch.

Sir Richard Rich (c.1496-1567)

Take, for example, Sir Richard Rich (later Lord Rich), a most loyal servant and supporter of Henry VIII, and an executor of his will in every sense of the word. On Henry's death in 1547, he simply adjusted his beliefs to conform to the Protestantism of the reign Edward VI. On Edward's death in 1553, he radically altered his religious views again to suit those of Mary I; and he became as zealous a persecutor of the Protestant cause as he had previously been its firm advocate.

One day, during Mary I's reign, Lord Rich was closely cross-examining a poor man called Thomas Wats. When he asked him about the source of his "heretical views", Rich received this devastating reply: "Sir, you taught them me!..."⁸

Those who are ensnared by servile fears will never make true followers of Jesus Christ whilst they remain in that condition; for they will love the world too much and the things that are in the world.⁹ God's Word for them will be like the seed that fell amongst the thorns that was soon choked by the cares and considerations of this life.¹⁰ Let us consider the second type of fear: -

2: *Fear based upon heavenly rewards,
or hell's avoidance may be simply*



This differs from servile fear in that it is focussed upon God; but it is not based upon the fear of the Lord about which the Psalmist speaks. In one sense, it is the fear that often precedes salvation: it is the awareness of the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,¹¹ yet without a knowledge of the holy.¹² It may express itself by serving the Lord out of duty rather than of making His service a delight.

There is another form of self-serving fear, which focusses its attention on the

rewards of heaven rather than the glorifying of God. On one occasion, there was an argument amongst the disciples about who would be the greatest in heaven.¹³ Maybe they were afraid that, unless they staked their claim there and then, the true claimant might lose it. The Lord reproved and corrected them, by telling them that those who desired to be first *the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.*¹⁴

Persistent

Yet this attitude persisted. At a later date, James and John put in a request to sit on the Lord's right and left hand in glory. This led only to further resentment by the others.¹⁵ What should one's true state of mind be?

*“My God, I love Thee – not because
I hope for heaven thereby,
Nor yet because who love Thee not
Are lost eternally.”*

So wrote Francis Xavier in the sixteenth century. The hymn continues –

*“Thou, O my Jesus, Thou didst me
Upon the cross embrace;
For me didst bear the nails and spear,
And manifold disgrace.”¹⁶*

And so we come to the crux of the matter: –

*3: Where there is a fear of offending
God, because of our heartfelt
love for Him, this fear is truly*



filial

That is the fear that the Heavenly Instructor would commend! It is the fear founded on love. It may be described as filial fear: This is the fear that causes believers to seek to know more fully God's will and purpose for their lives – indeed, one supreme purpose: that they may please Him, and Him alone. That is the

essence of what Charles Wesley once called: "The faith that sweetly works by love".¹⁷

Fear Founded on Love

*There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out all fear.*¹⁸ It abolishes all concern for wealth, power, position or reputation in the worldly sense. It extinguishes all desire for gain in the heavenly sense. It longs for one thing only: to magnify and glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever. Happy are those who seek for that which will last. Their blessings begin like this: -

*"Sin, my worst enemy before,
Shall vex my eyes and ears no more;
My inward foes shall all be slain,
Nor Satan break my peace again."*¹⁹

Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

But that is only the start. The Psalmist says that those who depart from evil, and do good, who seek peace and then pursue it,²⁰ will find that blessings abound from the Lord whose ears are open to their cry. You can read about the promises in Psalm 34 for yourself, such as -

- 1: The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them;*²¹
- 2: There is no want to them that fear him,*²²
- 3: Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all...*²³

That is the true fear which caused John Wesley to declare: -

*"Give me a hundred preachers, who fear nothing but sin,
and desire nothing but God... such alone will shake the
gates
of hell, and set up the kingdom of God on earth."*

To which his brother, Charles, added: -

*"Be it my only wisdom here
To serve the Lord with filial fear,
With loving gratitude;
Superior sense may I display;
By shunning every evil way,*

And walking with the good.”

Charles Wesley, 1707-88

[The idea for this sermon’s headings came from Thomas Watson of the seventeenth century.]

Footnotes

- 1: *O worship the King* v.5, by Robert Grant
- 2: John 3:8
- 3: Isaiah 1: 18
- 4: See: John 16:13b.
- 5: See: Jeremiah 17:1
- 6: Matthew 11:29b
- 7: 1 Corinthians 7:23
- 8: Told in more detail in *Bloody Mary’s Martyrs: The Story of England’s Terror* by Jasper Ridley pp 80-81
- 9: 1 John 2:15
- 10: See: Mark 4: 18 & 19
- 12: Romans 1:18
- 13: Proverbs 9:10b
- 14: See: Mark 9: 33-37
- 15: See: Mark 10: 35-45
- 16: Francis Xavier c1506-52 tr. by Edward Caswell, 1814-78
- 17: See: *Happy the man that finds the grace* (verse one).
- 18: 1 John 4:18
- 19: This is the original verse 5 to Isaac Watts’ hymn *Sweet is the work, my God, my King*.
- 20: Psalm 34: 7
- 21: Psalm 34: 9b
- 22: Psalm 34: 19

Next time: -

2: The Great Question

“What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?”

[Psalm 34:12]

Many questions are bandied around today; but there are no questions more pressing than “What is your heart’s true desire?” and “Where are you going?”