

Sunday 30th January, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

Good morning and welcome to our interactive service. As we gather together today, it is good to be reminded of how great and awesome our God is. For as it says in Psalm 145: *“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty.”* Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father, You are our God, the almighty King. We marvel at your splendour and extol your wondrous name for ever and ever. You are most worthy of all praise, and your greatness is beyond comprehension. You are the creator, and the Lord of all. By your Word you created the heavens and the earth, the land and the sea, and everything in between. And you created us, and you continue to sustain us, and everything occurs according to your will. For you are majestic and infinite, your power is limitless, and you judge the world in righteousness and demand perfection. Yet you are caring and compassionate, loving, merciful and forgiving. And as we come before you today, we do so with trepidation and humility.

For we know that we have fallen short of your expectations. We forget about you, we rely on our own strengths, and don't acknowledge your blessings and all that you do for us. We have so much to be forgiven for. So, we ask for your forgiveness. We ask that you help us to focus on you: that we will be thankful for everything that you have given us, and continue to provide to us. And we ask that as we worship you today, that you will help us to set aside any distractions, and that we will focus on you, so that we can give you the honour and glory that you deserve. Amen.

Song – 10,000 reasons

[10,000 Reasons \(Bless the Lord o my soul \) - Matt Redman \(with Lyrics\) - YouTube](#)

Chorus Bless the Lord O my soul

O my soul

Worship His Holy name

Sing like never before

O my soul

I'll worship Your Holy name

2. You're rich in love

And You're slow to anger

Your name is great

And Your heart is kind

For all Your goodness

I will keep on singing

Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find

1. The sun comes up

It's a new day dawning

It's time to sing Your song again

Whatever may pass

And whatever lies before me

Let me be singing

When the evening comes

3. And on that day

When my strength is failing

The end draws near and my time has come

Still my soul will

Sing your praise unending

Ten thousand years

And then for evermore.

Bible Reading – Luke 12:13-21 (NIV)

¹³Someone in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?” ¹⁵Then he said to them, “Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions. ¹⁶And he told them this parable: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. ¹⁷He thought to himself, ‘What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.’ ¹⁸“Then he said, ‘This is what I’ll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. ¹⁹And I’ll say to myself, “You

have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.”²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?’²¹ “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

Announcements

Focus for the month – Vision. In the month of February we are focusing on vision. Our vision is what we want to see happen in our church and local community. We want to see people growing more like Jesus, and we want to see people coming to know Jesus. From 12pm today on Zoom, we will be looking at the way this is going to happen through our various ministries. See below for times.

Vision Sunday – This Sunday 30th January 2022. Each year we want to remind ourselves of why we do church and why we run certain activities within the Church. To do that we attempt to paint a vision of where we are going and what we hope to achieve. And we would encourage you to get involved in at least one aspect of our Churches work. A good way to do that would be to come to one or more of our Vision Sunday get together & see what our plans are and how you can be a part of those plans. **This will be run in person at the church hall, and a Zoom link is provided for those who can't make it in person:**

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84938241021?pwd=TVBVQzRFbTlTWnlsdjJlRE5UT0dRZz09>

Meeting ID: 849 3824 1021 Passcode: 686426

- 12:00pm Vision for Kids work Run by Suzie C
- 12:30pm Vision for Mission Run by Stephen T
- 1-2:30pm Break
- 2:30pm Vision for men's ministry Run by Stephen T
- 3:00pm Vision for Small Groups Run by Stephen T
- 3:30pm Vision for Pastoral Care Run by Joanna B
- 4:00pm Vision for Evangelism Run by Stephen/Suzie
- 4:30pm Vision for Youth Work Run by Jon B
- 5:00pm Vision for Creation Care Run by Stuart B

Church Camp Cancelled : (Unfortunately due to the current situation surrounding the Omicron outbreak we have decided to post pone the church camp. We hope to have it later in the year but will be update about that soon.

Church Activities Resuming - as school holidays come to an end we are starting up our normal church activities. For our Bible studies consult with your leader/s about if you will meet in person or on Zoom. If you would like to join a Bible study, speak to Stephen or Jon about this. Impact Youth will be starting up Friday Feb 4. Kids Church will also be commencing from next Sunday.

Bible Study Groups. It would be great if you were to consider joining one of our small groups, we have the following groups

Monday night	Womens	Fortnightly	Letitia W
Tuesday AM	Womens	Weekly	Linda S
Tuesday AM	Mixed	Weekly	Doug S
Tuesday night	Mens	Weekly	Rob H
Tuesday night	Mixed	Weekly	Ross L
Tuesday night	Young adults	Weekly	Jon B
Wednesday AM	Swansea	Weekly	Stephen T
Wednesday PM	Women	Weekly	Kaylene T
Wednesday night	Young families	Fortnightly (ZOOM)	Jon B
Thursday night	Mixed	Weekly	Alan W
Friday AM	Women	Weekly	Kerry P
SYBS	Years 10-12	Fortnightly	Alan W

Young Families Bible Study. We have a young families Bible study starting in Term 1. It will be held on Zoom each Wednesday night from 8-9pm. And once a month the families will meet at a park or house to catch up and pray together. Talk to Jon if you are interested.

Pandemic Prayers. As a gift for every regular attender of the church, we have published a book called Prayers from our People during the Pandemic. This is a collection of prayers that we sent around during 2020-21 as a part of our paper and interactive services. Please find the copy with your name on it and use it as an encouragement to pray.

Family Matters – Vision

<https://youtu.be/LJC9kWZfs0c>

Over the last few months, the Omicron variant has thrown us all a curve ball. Suddenly there are not just a few cases in our community but hundreds, even thousands of people all around us who have COVID. Which means that we can catch COVID more easily and we can end up being close contacts of people who have COVID even easier. And so because of this many of us have had to make changes to protect those we love.

So coming up to Christmas, some chose not to go out unnecessarily so that they could minimize the disruption to their family activities. And others did the same thing because they wanted to protect their clients or their staff when going to work. And I think for the most part this was a good and loving thing to do. Because as Christians we should want to care for others. We should want to protect others. And if we need to make a sacrifice for the good of others that is a godly thing to do.

But as Christians we now have a critical decision to make. Is work more important than worship? Does our family take a higher priority than God's family? Actually, will my love for God mean that God and His kingdom is more important than anything else? Because if God and His Kingdom is indeed coming first in my life then serving him becomes even more important than serving my family members or serving those at my workplace.

So the question I want to ask is when push comes to shove this year will you and I put God and his kingdom first or won't we? That's what we want to do as a Church this year. And that is what we are going to encourage you to do as individuals this year. And so our theme for the year is building the kingdom. God is going to grow his Church. God is going to build his kingdom this year, the question is are we going to be actively a part of this or are we going to put all our energies in other things?

And if our answer is yes, I will love the Lord God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength and I will love my neighbour, my family, my clients, my staff as well, then we all will have some choices to make.

Firstly, with worship. How do I prioritise worship this year? Well, I will come to worship whenever I can. And when I can't I will put aside that same time to both worship the Lord & to encourage others to worship the Lord. You know when you come to Church you come and worship but you are encouraging others to worship as well. You are saying to them there is nothing more important for me to do on a Sunday than for me to join my brothers and sisters in worshipping the Lord.

So if you can't come, you still need to communicate that to those around us. And you can do that by calling someone after your worship service and talking to them about what God is teaching you at the moment. You can do that by adding a comment to the facebook site, sending a link on social media or meeting over the phone each week with someone else to discuss the sermon.

Secondly with service. How can I serve God and His people this year? Many of our people have increased their service in the last two years, looking for opportunities to care for and look after and use their gifts and abilities in a different environment. But some of us are serving God less at the moment. And if you are

one of those people, you are missing out on opening yourself up to the power of God as you reach out and serve those around them.

Thirdly with prayer. Can we use our time more efficiently to pray this year? For our Church? For God's kingdom? For our family, our workmates, our clients and our neighbours? For the lost? In this uncertain world we have the chance of pointing to the certainty of God & his grace. Will we do that?

Lastly with fellowship, how do we show the other people in the Church we value them? How do we encourage them? How do we help them to grow in their faith? Over the last couple of years we have seen our brothers and sisters in Christ less than we used to? How can we make up for that this year?

Our aim this year is to build the kingdom. On this rock I will build my Church, Jesus says, and the gates of hell will not prevail. COVID will not prevail. Sickness will not prevail. Laziness will not prevail. Fear will not prevail. God is the one who will prevail. And he is calling us to be a part of this building project.

So as we start the year, let us pick up this vision of building the kingdom through prioritising prayer, seeking out avenues of service, figuring out how to foster fellowship and working on our worship. And then by placing all those things in God's hands, we will see how God will continue to build his Church and build his kingdom in our midst.

Song – By Faith [By Faith - Keith & Kristyn Getty - YouTube](#)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. By faith we see the hand of God
In the light of creation's grand design
In the lives of those who prove His faithfulness
Who walk by faith and not by sight | 3. By faith the prophets saw a day
When the longed-for Messiah would appear
With the power to break the chains of sin & death
And rise triumphant from the grave |
| 2. By faith our fathers roamed the earth
With the power of His promise in their hearts
Of a holy city built by God's own hand
A place where peace and justice reign | 4. By faith the church was called to go
In the power of the Spirit to the lost
To deliver captives and to preach good news
In every corner of the earth |

Chorus

- | | |
|---|--|
| We will stand as children of the promise
We will fix our eyes on Him our soul's reward
Till the race is finished and the work is done
We'll walk by faith and not by sight | 5. By faith this mountain shall be moved
And the power of the gospel shall prevail
For we know in Christ all things are possible
For all who call upon His name |
|---|--|

Pastoral Prayer Points

"The Lord is great and is highly praised; his greatness is unsearchable." (Psalm 145:3)

Pray for Russia: Pray for true religious freedom to reign as discrimination and prejudices against evangelicals are rooted out. Pray for the millions who consider themselves Russian Orthodox to embrace spiritual change that leads to biblical faith. Pray for a hope for the future found not in drugs, alcohol, or crime, but in Jesus Christ alone.

Pray for the federal election - that leaders will be appointed who help our nation flourish.

Pray that fear and division that has affected so many families and communities will be a thing of the past.

Pray for churches. Pray that God would be equipping his people for the work of ministry. Pray the body of Christ would be built up. That the church would speak the truth in love, and we would grow up in every way into Him who is our head - Christ.

Pray that we would catch the vision: of God's greatness, the world's desperate need for salvation, and the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Bible Reading – Luke 12:22-34 (NIV)

²² Then Jesus said to his disciples: *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear."* ²³ *For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.*

²⁴ *Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds!* ²⁵ *Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?* ²⁶ *Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?* ²⁷ *"Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these."* ²⁸ *If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!* ²⁹ *And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it.* ³⁰ *For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them.* ³¹ *But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.*

³² *"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom."* ³³ *Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.* ³⁴ *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Sermon: Don't Worry, Be First – y (Stephen T)

We start the new year with a dark cloud hanging over us. Will 2022 be more of the same? Will COVID again steal much of our freedoms away from us? The borders might be down, the shops might be full again but will I now be exposed to COVID? Will I become a close contact? Will my freedoms be again restricted & my hopes in lockdown for another year?

And what of our Church? Two years ago, we were riding a wave! 220 people coming each week to our services. Enthusiasm, joy, excitement with a new group of young families, a young associate minister, a core group of faithful workers, the Lord was going to take us onward and upward, wasn't he? And then after the first wave of COVID struck we struggled to get people back to Church or even to connect with others. And after the second wave numbers were down to 2/3 of where we were previously. And then with Omicron, 2/3's of our people stopped coming to Church. Are we going to get these people back? And how much energy will we need to put in to do that? What future do we have going into 2022?

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1. Today's Problems.

And yet we haven't yet touched on the fact that the developing world have very little access to vaccinations. That billions of people live in poverty. That climate is changing. That wars are raging. That international relations are at a low ebb. And that there are billions of people who don't have a relationship with Jesus. Today we have more than enough problems to keep us all awake every night of the week. And our passage today acknowledges that these sorts of things affect us all greatly.

a) **(Worry).** Because in it, Jesus tells us *"Do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear."* ²³ *For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes."* Do you know that the English word for worry is based on the old German word meaning to strangle or to choke? For that's what our worries do to us, they strangle us.

And you have to admit worrying is on the rise. If it was on the stock exchange, we would be encouraged by our stock broker to buy, buy, buy. We worry about so many things. We worry about our kids. We worry about our health. We worry about our finances. We worry about our future. And worry affects our mental health. We worry about so many things, most of which we cannot change at all.

Listen to what Jesus goes on to say? ²⁵ *“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?”* ²⁶ *“Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?”*

Now some worry can make a difference. If you are worried about a subject you could choose to do more study. If you are worried about someone's health, you could take them to a doctor. If you are worried about your kid's future, you could dedicate more and more time each day to pray for them. So, not all worrying is wrong. The apostle Paul says he was so worried about the Church at Corinth, that he wrote them a letter. But to worry about something you have no power over? Adding a single hour to your life? Or an extra centimetre to your height? That is a complete and utter waste of time.

Worrying about tomorrow does not help tomorrow and it certainly doesn't help today either. If anything, it chokes the life out of today, it strangles our decision making today. Someone has said that the average person is crucifying themselves between two thieves, the regrets of yesterday and the worries of tomorrow. And so many of our friends and family and maybe we as well are doing just that. But what's more we are also being

b) **Consumed by consuming.** ²⁷ *“Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these.”* ²⁸ *If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!* ²⁹ *And **do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it.***”

Here is another problem in today's world. We are consumed by what we eat & what we drink & by what we wear. Next time you find yourself watching a block of adds see how many of them are about what we eat, drink or wear? Or about our image. About our hopes and dreams. We are consumed with the good life. Fixated about being beautiful people.

In a fascinating article for *The Huffington Post*, Professor of International Relations at George Washington University, a man called Amitai Etzioni said that consumerism is, quote, *“the obsession with acquisition that has become the organizing principle of American life. A culture,”* he goes on to say, *“in which that urge to consume dominates the psychology of citizens is a culture in which people will do almost anything to acquire the means to consume – working slavish hours, behaving rapaciously in their business pursuits, and even bending the rules in order to maximize their earnings. They will also buy homes beyond their means and think nothing of running up credit card debt. It therefore seems safe to say that consumerism is, as much as anything else, responsible for the current economic mess.”*

And then he makes this really helpful and important point, revealing point. He says this, *“Consumerism will not just magically disappear from its central place in our culture. It needs to be supplanted by something.”* It needs to be replaced by something else. Being consumed by something is not wrong. The problem is today we are consumed with the wrong thing. And yet there is still another big problem today.

c) **Fear.** Let's hear what Jesus has to say again. ³² *“**Do not be afraid**, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.”* Today we are afraid of so many things. Fear of failure, fear of losing control, missing out, sickness, rejection, death.

So there we have it. Worry, anxiety & fear paralyses us. And being consumed by consuming distracts us away from the things that give us real meaning in life. But I wonder does God have a solution to today's problems. A blueprint that could set us on the right track in 2022 both as individuals & as a Church? Yes, he

does & that is what this passage is all about. God counters today problems with God's promises & in particular God promises to do 4 things....

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2. With God's Promises

a) **God Feeds.** *"Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes. Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap; they have no storeroom or barn; yet **God feeds** them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! ²⁵ Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? ²⁶ Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"*

Birds don't farm and yet God still feeds them. He even feeds the ravens, those unclean scavengers. And we are worth far, far more than the birds. We have been created in God's very own image, that's how special we are to him. Yet he has set the world up in a certain way where by his good providence, all animals are given what they need. So how much more will God provide for us, his children?

That has been my experience and I am sure that has been yours as well. It is not that at times I haven't been without, nor have I always got what I wanted but God has always provided for my daily bread. There's a great story about George Mueller the Englishman who set up a number of orphanages in London in the mid 1800's. They were always struggling to feed all the mouths they were responsible for. On one famous occasion they sat down for breakfast with no food in front of them. Mueller prayed and thanked God that he always provided. He finished his prayer and there was a knock at the door. The baker had baked too much bread for the day & was wondering if the orphanage would like some!

So, God's first promise is "Don't Worry, God Feeds." Which means we Christians are to be different to everyone else. Let them have their worry beads, their stress, their concerns. But we will leave our worries with him because we can't add a single hour to life through worry, you will only reduce it! So, hand it over to Him. Place the things that worry you in his hands. Let Him be concerned with the things that he controls and you get on with the task of being different, being more like Jesus.

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A widow who had successfully raised a very large family was being interviewed by a reporter. In addition to six children of her own, she had adopted 12 other youngsters, and when asked the secret of her outstanding accomplishment, her answer to the newsman was quite surprising. She said, "I managed so well because I'm in a partnership!" "What do you mean?" he inquired. The woman replied, "Many years ago I said, 'Lord, I'll do the work and You do the worrying.' And I haven't had an anxious care since."

Now I'm not saying this is easy advice to follow. There are so many things that will cause us concern. And rightly so. As Jesus says each day will have enough troubles of its own. He is not denying that there are not plenty of things to worry over. But a lot of things we worry about are not today's concerns but tomorrow's concerns and they may or may not ever happen. And a lot of things we worry about we have no control over, so why not hand them all over to God? He is in control. Let him do all the worrying. Don't worry, God feeds &

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b) **God clothes.** ²⁷ *"Consider how the wild flowers grow. They do not labour or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendour was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little faith!"*

We don't need to be anxious because God clothes. Just look at the flowers, they don't spin or sew or work in factories but they have the most beautiful clothing. And so many flowers only last a season before they are gone. And the grass especially in the middle east gets burnt off each summer, so its life span is also

very short. But humans have been made to live forever. For eternity. And so God promises to clothe them even more.

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I was reading about the English executive J Arthur Rank. He made a decision to do all of his worrying & solve all the problems he was anxious about on one day each week, Wednesday. When anything happened that made him anxious. Or stressed out. He would write it down and put it in his worry box. And he would forget about it until the following Wednesday. The interesting thing was that when he opened his worry box the next Wednesday, he found that most of the things that had bothered him for the past six days were already settled. So, don't worry God feeds, don't be anxious, God clothes & don't set your heart on these things

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c) For **God knows.** ²⁹ *"And **do not set your heart** on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your **Father knows** that you need them."* God knows. He knows our future as well as He knows our past. He knows our needs and he knows our greeds. He knows the things that will satisfy and things that won't satisfy. He knows what is ultimately good for you and what is bad for you. And he even knows how to turn the bad things into good things for those who love him.

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d) And finally don't be afraid, for **God gives.** ³² *"**Do not be afraid**, little flock, for **your Father** has been pleased to **give** you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

There is no need to be afraid because we have a heavenly Father who loves to give good gifts to his children. Who is himself the source of all good things. And so if he gives you possession or money or homes or family, they are not be held too tightly. Because if you are generous with these things, you will earn for yourselves real treasure. True riches.

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You see wise people put their treasure where they cannot lose it. Where it won't wear out. Where rust and moths can not erode. They realise that money can't buy you happiness, it can't even in the words of my brother buy you a boat that will enable you to sail right next to happiness either. But your money and possessions can be traded in for something even more valuable. A heavenly treasure.

You see money is a bit like sea water, the more you drink the more you want to keep drinking. And so, one way to not get sucked in to that vortex is to be generous. In that way you can use your money for God's kingdom, help the poor, plant new churches, encourage the preaching of God's word, allow his message to go via our missionaries, or show care and compassion on someone that really needs it. Money can do all that and by being generous it also gets rid of money's power over us. Quite simply we don't need to fear because we know that God is a God who will always provide.

Friends, our security should never be in our own abilities to make things happen. Our security needs to be in God's provision of all things. Most importantly, His provision of a secure place, His kingdom. A place where we can send up our contributions now and enjoy them for all eternity.

Today there are so many things we fear or worry about or are anxious over or we set our hearts on that just fail to deliver what they promise us. But the solution is here right in front of us. God. Don't worry God feeds. Don't be anxious, God clothes, Don't set your heart on consumables, God knows. And don't fear God gives.

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3. Today's Problems, God's Promises and lastly **Our Priorities.**

For tucked away in our passage are three f words that we should set our hearts upon. Three things that we can do today and throughout this year that will help us deal with all the stuff that is currently swirling around our heads. And the first one is Faith.

²⁸ *"If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little **faith!**"*

If God gives and knows, clothes and feeds, we need to trust Him. Don't worry, have faith. Don't be anxious, trust. God is able to meet our needs. He promises to meet our needs. He has met our needs in the past and he will meet our needs again in the future. You see worry can be a sin. It is all up to me. I have to change the situation and I don't know how I am going to do that. But faith tells one self, God is bigger than this worry. My weakness is an opportunity to trust in God's strength.

You see God is not stingy. He is incredibly generous. He doesn't give the birds or the flowers the bare minimum, he gives them his very best. And we are worth more to him than they are. He even welcomes back the prodigal son and throws a party for him. Don't you believe that? Well have faith that he will look after you no matter what is happening.

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But as author John Ortberg points out *"For most of us, the great danger is not that we will renounce our faith. It is that we will become so distracted and rushed and preoccupied that we will settle for a mediocre version of it. We will just skim our lives instead of actually living them."* So, this year exercise your faith. Finds ways to trust him rather than to worry, believe in him rather than get anxious. Because after all he is your **Father**. Another F word.

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³⁰ *"For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your **Father knows** that you need them."* Our good, good father knows what is best. Do you know of a good father who doesn't care whether his children eat? Do you know of a good father who doesn't care whether his children are clothed? Do you know of a good father who doesn't care whether his children have a place to lay their heads at night? And our God is a good, good father.

So, today spend some time reflecting on the Lord as your heavenly father. Our father who art in heaven. I have an earthly father who I love spending time with. A father who raised me and provided for me and set an example for me. And I have a heavenly Father who fills in all the gaps that my earthly father didn't fill and yet does so much more.

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Faith, father and lastly First. ³¹ *"But seek **first** his kingdom, & these things will be given to you as well."* Seek God first. Yes, you can seek other things but not first. Yes, they will come into your vision but not be in the centre of your vision. Yes, you will want to serve other things but not at the expense of serving Christ. It is Him that you have to seek. It is He you need to treasure. It is the Lord that needs to be in the centre of your vision. It is Him you must serve

So do we seek *first* God's kingdom. Does it show in our choices? Does it show with what we do with our money? Are we really seeking God first with what we do with the resources that God gives us? Does it show? Do we give then *towards* the cause of the kingdom, or do we spend it on something else? Do we *really* show that He is first in our lives with what is important to us- with what we value. If someone was to take an audit of our money, our time, our talents would it show, really show that God comes first. First!

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There's an old story about a university professor talking to his students. And he gets a vase and he fills it with rocks the size of tennis balls until it reaches the top. And then he asks his students, is this vase full and

they say yes, it is. And so, he gets out some pebbles and pours them between the rocks until they reach the top. And he says, it is it now full? And they say yes, now it is really full.

And then he gets some sand and they go in between the pebbles right up to the top and he says now is it full? And they agree that now it is full. And he says to his class the lesson is, you have to put the big rocks in first otherwise there is no room for the little stuff. And friends we have to put God first. Not after work. Not after family. Not after health. Not after money. God must go in first otherwise you will fill up your life with stuff that is just not important. That's why there is so much worry and anxiety and fear around today. Because we are not seeking God and his kingdom. We are not trusting in our Father God's promises.

Slide 21

So, this is our vision Sunday here at church and the application is quite clear. We are not going to concentrate on buildings, even though we might have a building programme, we are going seek God and his kingdom first. We are not going to place all our emphasis on our kids work, we will model and teach them about God and His kingdom first. We are not going to trust in our programmes, our people, our music, our website, or ourselves. We are going to seek God and his Kingdom. And we need you to do that as well.

Come to Church each week you are able because God is first in your life. Care for God's people using your gifts and abilities because you want His Kingdom to grow. Give sacrificially and generously of your money because you don't want to be controlled by it and one way of doing that is letting God decide how to spend it.

Yes, God is building his Kingdom. Yes, God will build his church. But he is calling us to seek Him first. To seek His kingdom before our own little kingdoms. So don't worry about COVID. Don't be anxious about your future. Don't be consumed by consumables & don't fear what is going on all around us. For God feeds, God clothes, God knows and God gives. Seek God.

Song – May the mind of Christ my Saviour

[May the Mind by Emu Music \(with Lyrics\) - YouTube](#)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. May the mind of Christ, my Saviour,
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.</p> | <p>4. May the love of Jesus fill me,
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing,
This is victory.</p> |
| <p>2. May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.</p> | <p>5. May I run the race before me,
Strong and brave to face the foe,
Looking only unto Jesus
As I onward go.</p> |
| <p>3. May the peace of God my Father
Rule my life in everything,
That I may be calm to comfort
Sick and sorrowing.</p> | <p>6. May His beauty rest upon me
As I seek the lost to win,
And may they forget the channel,
Seeing only Him.</p> |

Closing.

²⁹ *Do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things & your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom & these things will be given to you as well. "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.*