

Sunday 29th March, 2022

Service for Swansea & Charlestown Presbyterian Church

Welcome & Prayer

As we begin our service of worship this morning lets remind ourselves of the great God we are coming before & so begin with a reading from Psalm 46. *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her; she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”* (NIV)

Let us pray... “God our Refuge, when human resources fail, you alone remain our sure hope and defence. In the knowledge of your love, grant us courage. We place ourselves in your hands, confident that nothing can separate us from your love. We praise you for Jesus, the Living One, the First and the Last, who was dead, but now is forever alive. Help us, who have not seen, to believe; send us, as you have sent Jesus, to greet the world with your words of hope, life and peace and to share with all the Spirit’s new life of forgiveness. We ask through the Lord Jesus, our Passover and our Peace, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Song – Only a Holy God [Only A Holy God- City Alight - YouTube](#)

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| <p>1. Who else commands all the hosts of heaven
Who else could make every king bow down
Who else can whisper and darkness trembles
Only a Holy God
What other beauty demands such praises
What other splendour outshines the sun
What other majesty rules with justice
Only a Holy God</p> | <p>3. Who else could rescue me from my failing
Who else would offer His only Son
Who else invites me to call Him Father
Only a Holy God
Only my Holy God!</p> |
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*Come and behold Him
The One and the Only
Cry out, sing holy
Forever a Holy God
Come and worship the Holy God*

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| <p>2. What other glory consumes like fire
What other power can raise the dead
What other name remains undefeated
Only a Holy God
Come and behold Him
The One and the Only</p> | <p>Cry out, sing holy
Forever a Holy God
Come and worship the Holy God</p> |
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Bible Reading – Matthew 19:13-22 (NIV)

Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. 14 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” 15 When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from

there. 16 Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" 17 "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments." 18 "Which ones?" he inquired. Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, 19 honour your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbour as yourself.'" 20 "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" 21 Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth

Announcements

A special day! It is great to have you along today as we enjoy a family fun day together as an excuse to launch our new building extensions that began this weekend last year. After Church and morning tea finishes there will be plenty of activities for kids and their families as well as a lunch together. Please stay and enjoy the fun and meet some more of the people that call this church their spiritual home.

A special week! It's been wonderful to have had so many opportunities this week to tell people about the hope that we can have through a relationship with our Saviour, Jesus.

- On Friday we did some street evangelism, where we shared the good news that has changed our lives.
- On Saturday morning the men had a BBQ breakfast together and heard about how Jesus had changes one of the mission team's lives
- On Saturday afternoon the women painted and sipped non-alcoholic cocktails while being challenged to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

And at each occasion we were able to invite our friends and family along to...

A special weekend. Next weekend we celebrate the Easter long weekend, the most important weekend for Christians in the whole year. Over the weekend we will have a number of special services – why not plan to join us for one or more this coming weekend?

Easter Thursday	4:30pm (Swansea)	6pm (Charlestown)
Good Friday	8am (Swansea)	9:45am (Charlestown)
Resurrection Sunday	8am (Swansea)	9:45am & 6pm (Charlestown)

A special thanks! To all the students from Christ College. It's been great to have you this week and have you join in and participate so meaningfully in all that we have done this week. We hope you have been encouraged by us as much as you have encouraged us.

A special meal. This week our Church is going to provide a thank you lunch for the staff at Charlestown Public in gratitude for them letting us use their facilities over the time our Church was redeveloped.

A special team. We are so thankful to all those who have worked hard on our behalf this term in leading bible studies, youth groups, kids church, creche, playgroup etc. With NSW school holidays coming up from this Friday, we will give you arrest from your labours by putting all our regular activities in recess for two weeks. Each of these groups should start back again during the week beginning Monday 20th April. Thank you for your faithfulness

Song – Amazing Grace (my chains) [Amazing Grace \(My Chains are Gone\) - Chris Tomlin \(with lyrics\) - YouTube](#)

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| 1. Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see | 3. The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures
Chorus |
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2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

4. The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God who called me here below
Will be forever mine, will be forever mine
You are forever mine

Chorus: My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love
Amazing grace

Pastoral Prayer Points

Pray for Vanuatu. Pray for our partner churches in Walaha and Hog Harbour that they will be faithful to God's unchanging word in the midst of an ever-changing world. That we can support and equip their leadership to better prepare their young people to be Christians in the midst of all the other options being currently presented to them through the world wide web. That God will raise up another team of young people to minister there in January 2027.

Pray for Libya. (Population 7 million, Christians 36,300) Libya remains incredibly dangerous for Christians. Most are forced underground. Pray that the rule of law is established in Libya and stability returns. Pray that secret believers find a way to follow Jesus in safety and fellowship. Pray for migrant Christians. Ask God to protect them from being targeted.

Pray for our world at war. Pray for wisdom for our world leaders as they seek to find a balance between their desire to bring about regime change in places where the leaders are oppressing their people and the need to only intervene when there is truly broad international support. Pray for a de-escalation in the wars in Iran and Ukraine. Pray for a truly just peace and not just a might is right solution.

Pray for our local community. That all may see that almost all the things that they are chasing at present is not bringing about any satisfaction. That they might see that the way they were created to live is in a relationship with their creator that can only be found through putting their trust in Jesus Christ.

Bible Reading – Matthew 19: 23-30 (NIV)

23 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, "Who then can be saved?" 26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." 27 Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" 28 Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life. 30 But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."

Sermon: Child – like or Childish? (Stephen T)

Sermon link: <https://youtu.be/rjrFja3wZyU>

I've lost count of how many conversations I've had like this. Someone says, "I grew up in church. I went to Sunday School. I know all the stories — Noah, David and Goliath, Daniel in the lions' den. But somewhere in my teenage years... or at university... it just stopped working for me."

Often the explanation goes something like this: “When I was a child, everything felt black and white. God good. Sin bad. Bible true. But then life became complicated. You meet intelligent people who disagree with Christianity. You encounter suffering that doesn’t fit neatly into a children’s Bible story. You realise moral questions are more complex than you first thought. And I’ve had so many conversations with people who say, “I didn’t reject Christianity because I wanted to rebel. It just stopped making sense. The simple faith I had as a child couldn’t survive in a complicated world.”

Maybe that’s you. Maybe you were brought along today by a friend, and somewhere along the way you quietly stepped back from Jesus. But here’s what I’ve come to see — the answer is not to retreat into simplistic, black-and-white thinking. And it’s not to walk away from faith the moment things become complex. You see, the Christian faith can handle scrutiny.

The Christian faith was never meant to remain at the level of flannel-graph simplicity. The Bible itself wrestles with suffering (Job), doubt (the Psalms), injustice (Habakkuk), and mystery (Romans 9–11). God does not ask us to turn off our minds. He invites us to bring our questions. And yet — here is the surprising thing — when that wrestling is done honestly, mature faith often looks strangely similar to childlike faith. Not childish faith. Childlike faith.

Slide 2

Because faith is not about knowing everything about everything. It’s about knowing enough about who God is — His character, His goodness, His grace in Christ — that you can trust Him with what you don’t yet understand. A child doesn’t understand how the world works. But that child knows their parent well enough to trust them & that brings us to Matthew 19

Slide 3

1. And the little children (verses 13-15)

“Then people brought little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked them. 14 Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” 15 When he had placed his hands on them, he went on from there.”

Jesus was a busy man. An important man. And he had places to go and people to meet and so when some parents started bringing their children for Jesus to bless them, the disciples shooed them away. Someone has to protect him from these constant demands. So, one way to do that is to get the kids out of the road so as to leave Jesus more time with the adults.

Slide 4

But Jesus rebukes them. That’s a strong word, isn’t it? God’s kingdom is for the children as much as the adults. Isn’t that what that old kid’s chorus says, *“Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in his sight, Jesus loves the little children of the world.”* But there is more to it than that. Jesus says we can learn from a child about who gets into the kingdom of heaven.

I was reading an email recently that said, *“My children have taught me many things”: My children taught me that if you hook a dog leash over a ceiling fan, the motor is not strong enough to rotate a 6 stone boy wearing underwear and a Superman cape. My children taught me that Lego’s will pass through the stomach of a 4-year old but Duplo will not. That play dough and microwave should not be used in the same sentence. That garbage bags do not make good parachutes. And my children taught me that you probably do not want to know what that odour **really** is.”*

Slide 5

So, what can a child teach us about God’s kingdom? Well, a little child is helpless and totally dependent upon the adults around them. They have nothing to offer, so they come as they are, empty handed. And they receive what is coming to them as a gift and they don’t try and pay the gift giver back. In short, a child

is a model of weakness, trust & dependence. Which gives you and I the perfect model of how we are going to get into God's kingdom.

For Jesus is saying that God's kingdom does not belong to the clever, or the moral or the wealthy, or the powerful. It comes through grace and grace alone. God's free gift offered to people like you and me. You see the kingdom **is received** not achieved. And so, like a little child you and I need to know enough about God to trust Him. To accept his grace is all that we need.

Slide 6

Now I am not pretending that is easy. It goes against almost everything we have been taught about being an adult. And that is why Matthew provides us with a case study of a young man who seemed to be a prime candidate of someone who should get into heaven.

Slide 7

2. Since a boy (verses 16-22)

16 *"Just then a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"*
 17 *"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, keep the commandments."* 18 *"Which ones?" he inquired. Jesus replied, "'You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, 19 honour your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbour as yourself.'"* 20 *"All these I have kept," the young man said."*

Slide 8

Here in front of Jesus is one impressive dude. He's rich, young and according to the gospel of Mark has a position of power. Yet it seems that there is a nagging sense of doubt in his head. He wants to be a part of God's family. He has followed the commandments ever since he was a boy. But there is still something missing in his life. And he is coming to Jesus asking him what extra things should he DO to get life. "What must I do to receive eternal life?"

He's a brave guy, isn't he? He is acknowledging that there must be more to life than money, power, even being a good guy. It's a position that a lot of men get to in middle age when all their hard work hasn't brought them the success and the peace, they had hope. And it is also a place that many women get to when their kids leave home. They have dedicated so much of their lives to their kids, how can they make meaning and sense of life from now on?

What can they add to their life to truly make sense of my life? Do I need an extra spark of romance? A world trip? A fitness fetish? Grandchildren? A whole new career?

So, Jesus takes this rich young ruler at where he is. You think you need **to do something**? Well, what does the Bible say you need to do? What does a good God tell you about the good life? That's why he takes him back to the ten commandments – have you committed murder or adultery or stolen or lied, have you always honoured your parents? How do you measure up to God's standards? Because God's standards are like a mirror, they will show us what we are really like & they are so high they will also show you how far short you are.

But unfortunately, when this RYR looks in the mirror, he doesn't see what God sees or what others see, all he can see is someone that has always done the right thing. And has kept these commandments **ever since he was a boy**. And that's the problem with religion, any religion, isn't it? Who gets to judge when you have done enough? Do I work out whether I have passed the test or does someone else?

Slide 9

So, Jesus points him to two of the commandments that up until this point have not been mentioned. Number 1, "You shall have no other gods before me." And number 10 "You shall not covet." The rich young ruler can show Jesus whether he is willing and able to keep these two commandments by *"sell(ing) your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."*

Wow. That's a tough call, isn't it? That's an incredibly high bar that Jesus is placing here. What everything? And follow anywhere? Surely my goodness, my religion, my wealth, my standing are enough? But Jesus answer is no, not in this case. For Jesus can see that this man's number 1 priority is his money. And in this man's case it was more important to him than the God who made him. And so, what he needed to do was not to add something to his life but to subtract the place money had over his life. For the rich young ruler didn't have money, **money actually had a hold on him** & it was only by giving his money away & by following Jesus would God regain his rightful place in this young man's life.

Now that doesn't mean that Jesus is calling all of us to do exactly the same thing that he is calling the rich young ruler to do. But there might be some here that will need to do that. We might be so taken by money that it is running our lives. Driving us to do extra hours at work to provide my family with the sort of lifestyle I want to give them. Forcing both parents back to work not because it is the best thing for the family but because we want the family to have all the good things in life that my parents were never able to give me.

It might be money that is the number 1 thing in our lives but it might be something else that over the years we have now put as the most important thing in our lives. Maybe it's the mortgage that now dictates every decision. Or the career that defines who I am. Or my lifestyle that controls all my expectations. Or what people think of me drives me on more than anything else. If that is the case Jesus might say something different to you and me.

Slide 10

In order to put God first in your life, maybe we have to give up our social media accounts, or our mobile phones. Maybe I have stop watching porn, or living with my girlfriend? Maybe I need to stop putting myself first or to reprioritise my career? Maybe I need to give up controlling everyone and everything or putting my family first or chasing after that next promotion or stopping sport from taking over all my leisure time. There are many things we might prioritise over following Jesus. But he, Jesus, needs to become my number priority.

Let me ask you an uncomfortable question: What, could Jesus put His finger on in your life and ask you to give it up completely, that would make you walk away sad? Because whatever that is, we may not have it; **it might have us** & in order to have a childlike faith, we need to trust Jesus with it. Depend upon him not it. In order to follow Jesus wherever he would go.

I had to make that sort of decision about 10 years after I had become a Christian. I was doing well in my career, had been transferred overseas for a while and was just about to get a huge work challenge, along with a promotion and a pay rise and pick up a position with my firm in Singapore for two years. And at the same time, I felt God was calling me into the ministry.

But being a minister meant 3 years of further study and no money. A halving of my income after that. The loss of overseas travel, because I just wouldn't be able to afford that any more on my reduced salary. But I sensed that my career had begun to define me. More and more I was beginning to see myself as a Chartered Accountant and not a child of God.

I knew that not every Christian needed to leave their job in order to follow Jesus but I sensed if I put stayed in my job for a big career move, there would be bigger career moves in the future that would again stop me going into the ministry.

Simon, James and John left their fishing boats and families to follow Jesus. Levi left his tax collecting business to follow Jesus. Later on, in this chapter blind Bartimaeus will leave his cloak, maybe his only

possession, to follow Jesus. Jesus doesn't ask us to add Church or to add faith or even to add Jesus to our long list of things we like to do. He wants us to be like a little child. And trust him with our lives. Follow him wherever he goes. Depend upon him, even if you don't have everything sorted out.

Slide 11

In the words of Corrie Ten Boom *"you will never know Jesus is all that you need, until you realise that Jesus is all that you have."*

Slide 12

For it is the little children, the ones who seem far away from the kingdom that get to enter into it & the ones like the Rich Young Ruler who seem like they have the money, the status & even the good works to fling open the gates, that end up missing out. For they fail to see that Jesus isn't asking anything from us that he hasn't already done himself for the Lord.

You see Jesus left heaven for us and our salvation. Jesus had the riches of the universe at his disposal and yet gave it all away to be born into a poor carpenter's family so that he might follow God's will all the way to the cross. It is his goodness that makes up for our lack of goodness. It was because he perfectly followed all of God's good commands, that opens the door for us to be forgiven when we fail to reach God's incredibly high standards. It is this Jesus who for takes God's wonderful grace and offers it to each of his children. And it up to us to exercise childlike faith to trust him & follow him. Even in the impossible

Slide 13

3. Children (verses 23-26)

23 "Then Jesus said to his disciples, "(Children), truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

Slide 14

That's impossible. The camel was one of the biggest of all animals in the ancient world and the eye of a needle is one of the smallest gaps. Getting a camel through an eye of a needle is like landing a Boeing 777 to land on the head of a pin. It's impossible. *25 "When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished & asked "Who then can be saved?" 26 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."*

You see only God can get the camel through the eye of the needle. Only God can land that 777 on the head of a pin. Yes, what Jesus is saying is next to impossible, to give up the most important thing in your life and follow him. But God will enable you to do it. He helped the disciples to give up their boats to follow Jesus. And he will help you to do it as well.

Slide 15

Don't think you can sell all your belongings and give the money to the poor? Of course, you can't without God doing a work in you. Don't think you can put your Saviour in front of your family. Your dead right. God has to change your priorities; God's grace must change your heart. The example of Jesus must completely transform all your thinking & feeling & doing.

Salvation is not self-improvement; it's a divine rescue. It's not adding Jesus to everything else, its putting Jesus before everything else. And that is where childlike faith comes to the fore. For when we are little children, we believe our parents can do anything. They can fix anything. They can lift anything. They can solve anything. If something is broken, Dad will fix it. If something is scary, Mum will handle it. In a child's mind, their parents can make the impossible possible.

Now as we grow up, we realise our parents are not actually omnipotent. They're human. But Jesus says something remarkable in this passage. After speaking about the camel and the eye of a needle, an image of impossibility. He says: "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." That is the heart

of childlike faith. Not pretending the problem is small or pretending the camel fits but believing that God can do what we cannot.

Because the good news of Jesus says that the greatest impossibility, that a sinful human being can have a right relationship with a righteous and holy God, has already been accomplished by Christ dying in our place on the cross. And you & I are invited today to put our trust in that. To depend upon what Jesus did for us & to follow him wherever he leads.

Slide 16

4. Even if it means **Leaving children (verses 27-30)**

27 Peter answered him, "We have left everything to follow you! What then will there be for us?" 28 Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. 29 And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life."

If you have left something for Jesus' sake you will not just get it back 100% but you will get it back 100 times. Someone once put it this way to me. I have a shovel where I give up things for God. But God has a far bigger shovel & so the more things I give up, the more I get.

Slide 17

That's been my experience. When I went into the ministry, I got a particularly hard time from my family when I decided to leave my career. Which meant that life was difficult for a number of years whenever I was around my parents & siblings but when I moved to my first Church I got involved in so many people's lives, I suddenly didn't just have two parents but 20 parents. Many of whom wanted to set me up with their single daughters!

And I gained brothers and sisters in Christ that still have a special place in my life. And I was running kid's clubs and youth groups and so soon I had all these young people that I had a real impact over their lives. And a few years later God opened up the way for me to go on mission to Vanuatu and ever since I have loved that opportunity to be involved in people from a very different culture. Which has filled that overseas travel longing.

I gave up family and money and homes and gained more family and homes and money. And yet God was even more gracious than that. He gave me back many of things I was willing to lay aside. So, for a long time, I have had a great relationship with my family. For God's shovel was certainly bigger than mine. He has more than made up for every loss that I have gone through. My childlike faith is still learning to trust my heavenly father in everything.

Slide 18

And then Jesus says: "Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." This is the summary of the whole scene. The rich young ruler looks first — but becomes last. The children look last — but are welcomed first. In God's kingdom, the order is reversed. Those who think they are first — self-sufficient, accomplished — will be last if they refuse to surrender. Those who know they are last — needy, empty-handed — will be first when they come to Christ.

Slide 19

The issue really comes down to what you treasure and who you treasure. Jesus, you see was not calling the rich young ruler away from treasure but calling him to embrace **the real treasure in life**, a relationship with Jesus Christ. For friends my last piece of testimony is that I have found that my childlike faith has meant that rather than missing out on things I have instead been given the most important thing in life. Access to the kingdom of God.



Something that doesn't last for a few short years here on earth, but something that I can enjoy for all eternity. I hope and pray that a real relationship with Jesus is something you will treasure above anything else as well.

Song – His mercy is more <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fAa2C1yoQ-0>

1. What love could remember
no wrongs we have done
Omniscient, all knowing,
He counts not their sum
Thrown into a sea
without bottom or shore
Our sins they are many,
His mercy is more

2. What patience would wait
as we constantly roam
What Father, so tender,
is calling us home
He welcomes the weakest,
the vilest, the poor
Our sins they are many,
His mercy is more

Chorus x2
Praise the Lord, His mercy is more
Stronger than darkness, new every morn
Our sins they are many, His mercy is more

3. What riches of kindness
He lavished on us
His blood was the payment,
His life was the cost
We stood 'neath a debt
we could never afford
Our sins they are many,
His mercy is more

Chorus x2

Closing. *“Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” 25 When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished & asked, “Who then can be saved?” 26 Jesus looked at them & said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”*