

AT LAST.

What a weekend!

Saturday was the day for the flu jab for those required by various health and physical problems (like asthma etc). It was an amazing sight by 8 am to see the top car park in Back Lane area closed off and totally filled with snaking lines of people waiting to gain entrance to the surgery where the all important jab was waiting for them. Just one doctor (lots of practice nurses and other staff as well) waiting to help you on your way suitably "armed" to face the winter foe.

It was also something of a wait to get into church on Sunday. I did ask you to be patient with us as we seek to re-open for worship again. With the problem of social distancing and the temperature check we are compelled to carry out as a requirement for re-opening you may have had to wait in a line to get into the morning church service. For those who did attend you also encountered all the other measures we were required to carry out. Just like the "flu jab experience" the ONE GREAT PHYSICIAN - THE LORD JESUS CHRIST was present waiting to speak into our lives and bless us as we journey on to face whatever lies ahead.

Having said that, as far as I could tell, what a joy, what a blessing, what a relief to be back on familiar ground and discovering from the Word of God how we can face the coming days with greater faith, greater comfort, greater joy, greater hope knowing GOD is with us, for us, and will not leave us.

It is something of a tightrope we as the church leaders are treading because any sanctions or fines for non compliance will be something we will have to face. There are churches who have disobeyed the requirements and "*done their own thing*" with consequent fines. A few individuals here in Rochford also are not happy and are bombarding me with diverse opinions, misinformation, and even threats as to dire consequences for doing what we are trying to do. It is easy to stand on a sideline and make such comments. I wrote the Church at Home notes more than a month ago and say how apt they seem. So much from every angle amounts to "just a noise". At the beginning of the week further "lock down " measures came into force because of "the spike" in the West Midlands. None of us can tell what is before us. So my simple plea is this. Do not lose your confidence in the Lord, keep trusting Him. Be patient with us as we lead you - we only want the best for you all.

David P Saunders

ROCHFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Welcome to

CHURCH AT HOME

Sunday 20th September 2020

"JUST A NOISE"

Read through this outline and join with everyone else at 11 am

HYMN MP 200 (to read or sing)

Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father
There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not, Thy compassions they fail not,
As Thou hast been, Thou for ever will be.

*Great is Thy faithfulness,
Great is Thy faithfulness,
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand has provided,
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me.*

Summer and winter, and spring time and harvest;
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above.
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin, and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide'
Strength for today, and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside.

Chorus MP 245

How great is our God, how great is His name.
How great is His love, forever the same.
He rolled back the waters of the Red Sea,
And He said "I will never leave you,
Put your trust in Me."

(It would be good if you said this prayer out aloud)

*O Lord God our glorious, gracious, heavenly Father
You alone are worthy to be praised.*

Sometimes we really feel helpless, poor and needy.

*Give us the strength, and the faith to trust You more
and follow You because you are loving, faithful and dependable*

AMEN

You may like to say the Lord's prayer also.

BIBLE VERSES FOR THE WEEK

Psalm 86

JUST A NOISE

The Passover night was over and Moses was leading the Israelites to the Promised Land. So we tend to read the story of their journey very quickly. Our focus is on the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and the ultimate destruction of their enemy who had made them slaves for so long. So there they were journeying on their way when God gave Moses some seemingly strange instructions "*Turn back and camp at Phahiroth*" Why? Well the next of the verses state how "*Pharaoh will think the Israelites are wandering about the land in confusion*" (Exodus 14:1-3). The King James rendering of the text is more dramatic. "*Pharaoh will say ... they are entangled in the land - the wilderness has shut them in*".

There are times when situations and problems come our way and we feel "entangled" by them. Just like now. Where is everything going? How are we going to get out of this? Everything seems so confused. Allow me to remind you. There can be no entanglement, no wilderness confusion that can shut us in when God is leading. In the **same** chapter 14, the **same** people will hear Moses shout "*Do not be afraid (stand still)*" sooner or later "*you will see the deliverance (salvation of the Lord)*" (Exodus 14:13) AND THEY DID as they crossed the Red Sea so miraculously and spectacularly. We do not have to give in and give up because of the discouraging words so constantly being hurled at us. These modern day Pharaohs will not have the last word. Delivering a message Jeremiah makes an incredible comment "*Pharaoh is only a loud noise*" (Jeremiah 46:17) From the TV bias reporting, the glaring newspaper headlines, the ministerial statements, the chaotic decision making - it is only a noise. We can determine to trust God and not be afraid. So follow me as we look at some wonderful words in Psalm 86. How are you David? "***I am in trouble***" would be his answer. David is facing formidable enemies and can only comment "*I am poor and*

needy" as he calls out for God to help. Here is a remarkable thing, he pastes together a mosaic of quotations (from what he had previously written). Feeling totally inadequate to face what was going on and what lay ahead, David is encouraged by what he knows about the Lord. Guess what - we can do the same. God You don't change "*there is none like you (v8)* !

THE RESUME - what God is.

A God full of COMPASSION

He looks at us, senses, appreciates our situation and need. It means He is willing and ready to help in situations when no one else is doing anything.

A God who is GRACIOUS

You sense how this conveys love and concern. It is a quality that lifts you up, enhances you. David says "*You alone are God (v10)*" "*No deeds can compare with Yours*" (v8) Reading Psalm 73:1 in Today's Message was an eye opener for me. "*No doubt about it, God is good. But I nearly missed it. I was looking the other way*" What a challenge to keep our eyes on Jesus. He is our source, security and peace in all of our circumstances. No looking the other way or you will miss Him.

A God who is LONGSUFFERING

Something we all need to know is that God does not give up on us. He believes in us, wants us to reach the goal and our destiny. The NIV translates He is "*abounding in love and faithfulness*" Do you hear the echo in your heart "*Faithful One so unchanging, ageless One, You're my Rock of peace*"

THE REQUEST- what we need.

"Preserve my life" (v2)- I'm in trouble again !

"Unite my heart (v11) - I only want You. I want my heart fixed on You. A divided heart leads to instability and uncertainty.

"Strengthen my hand" (v16) - when you reach the breaking point you have two options - break down or break through.

Nothing catches God off guard and nothing is too hard for Him to handle. The personal situation we are now in with Covid-19 and the church situation can all become a platform for Him to demonstrate His love and care for us. Jeremiah's lament "*Great is Thy faithfulness. His mercies begin fresh every morning. I say to myself the Lord is good to those who depend on Him*" (Lamentations 3:22 -25)

So keep on trusting God **DPS**