

cried out for help from Elisha. Her husband had been a godly supporter of Elisha. She was instructed to collect all the jars from her neighbours and put what she had in her final jar of oil into these other jars. She did, with help from her sons, and miraculously managed to fill all the jars! From there, she was able to pay her debts and live from the proceeds of the jars of oil. This incident teaches us that good people, (God's people) can go through tough times. The woman had humbly to seek help from Elisha and her neighbours. Again, as she did what God's servant had instructed her to do, the little became a lot.

In God's mercy, God can make much of a life surrendered to Him. Think of what a witness this miracle must have been in the village the woman lived in as they received their donated jars back filled with oil (at a price of course!)

3. Because of God's mercy... there is always a new day dawning

In the days of Solomon, the first Temple built was magnificent. The second Temple was less so. It is not easy to live in days of "small things". Yet, God's mercies, great or small, are to be acknowledged with thankfulness.

It is encouraging to hear of what God has done in the past – but don't we long for greater things to be seen, today?

We must, of course, proceed with faith however dark and difficult the days may be, knowing our God rules over all things and his timing is perfect.

We have God's promises about the glorious future for those who prove themselves faithful to the end. There is a new day dawning.

In Revelation 4.1b Jesus, our glorified Lord says to John, **"I will show you what must take place after this..."**

We, like John, can only see with limited sight but Jesus is the First and Last, the beginning and the end. He sees all things.

How about your **"After this..."**?

Perhaps we have let the Lord down? Perhaps we see no way ahead?

Let Jesus be your Way. Depend upon His unchanging love and wisdom.

Because of the far reaching effect of God's mercy, in Christ, there is hope, there can be new shoots of growth – like Samson's hair – however small the beginnings when the Lord is at work the outcome will fulfil his purposes and be for His glory – as even Samson found out as his strength returned to push the pillars down. Praise God that He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve – and uses our lives!

ROCHFORD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH CHURCH AT HOME Sunday 6th June 2021

"Thankful for 'small mercies' ?"

**Years I spent in vanity and pride,
caring not my Lord was crucified,
knowing not it was for me He died on Calvary.**

*Mercy there was great and grace was free,
pardon there was multiplied to me,
there my burdened soul found liberty, at Calvary*

**By God's word at last my sin I learned,
then I trembled at the law I'd spurned,
'til my soul imploring turned to Calvary.
*Mercy there was great...***

**Now I've given to Jesus everything,
now I gladly own Him as my King,
now my raptured soul can only sing of Calvary.
*Mercy there was great...***

**Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan!
oh, the grace that brought it down to man!
oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary!
Mercy there was great...
(Mission Praise 967)**

**There's a way back to God from the dark paths of sin;
there's a door that is open and you may go in:
At Calvary's cross is where you begin,
when you come as a sinner to Jesus.
(Mission Praise 682)**

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Almighty God

Thank you for sending your Son to save us and give us access to you and an understanding of your great love. Forgive us for we have fallen short of your perfect ways. Help us to live lives that give you glory and praise. We pray for those in need in our Church and in the wider world. Have mercy upon us all.

In Jesus' Name we pray. Amen.

Bible Verses for Today

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you." (1 Peter 1.3-4)

"But the hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved" (Judges 16.22)

We have all had unruly hair during lockdown unless we have a hairdresser in the family or little hair to begin with!

Samson, a judge, i.e. a leader of God's people was given extraordinary strength through his uncut hair. When he was born he was under a Nazarite vow which involved special rules for Samson to live by. There were times when he came close to giving the secret away in the arms of Delilah – until disaster struck as God allowed Samson to be overcome and his hair cut and his strength lost. Samson didn't realise at first that God had left him when his strength was gone, until it was too late. He had been trusting in his own strength, not God's – a big mistake!

Hope you have learned this lesson? **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,"** said the Apostle Paul. **"Apart from me you can do nothing,"** the Lord Jesus said. Remember where to turn and save yourself from great frustration and defeat.

God, in his mercy, still had plans for the newly-shaven Samson. He would ultimately kill more Philistines in death than he did in life.

What an intriguing verse Judges 16.22 (above) is? It was a **statement of fact** – hair grows, but also a **statement of faith** – God had not finished with Samson and the renewed strength he was going to give him.

What lessons can we learn from this verse for our lives and our Church?

Apart from the reminder to depend fully upon God and His strength in every situation – and not to take God for granted. There is the lesson...

1. Because of God's mercy... when all looks finished there is still hope

The Christian faith has a dimension no other religion can match. Its founder / leader is alive forevermore. As a result there is no limit to what His followers can know and do. If even death could not hold the Lord Jesus Christ, we can also be **"more than conquerors."**

Like Samson, Jesus death brought about victory over the enemy. Our enemy, Satan, was crushed by Jesus heel (see the prophecy of this in Genesis 3.15). Yes, Jesus knew Satan's blow in death but he was punished in our place so we can, by God's great mercy, know release from Satan's hold.

In the resurrection, death could not hold Jesus – nor can it hold any who are **"in Christ"**. This hope belongs alone to the Christian.

We were dead in sin – in a helpless, hopeless state, and have been made alive in Christ. We have new life as we live our lives in view of God's mercy (Romans 12.1) We live in hope, even when faced by overwhelming odds.

2. Because of God's mercy...He can make the little grow and be effective

Remember the feeding of the 5000 began with the surrender of a lunch-box by a young boy. Jesus blessed and broke the bread and fish and then with amazement the disciples distributed it to those sat in small groups on the ground.

Which part was key to the miracle happening? It wouldn't have happened without Jesus. True. But the giving of the lunch-box and the giving out of the bread and fish played a major part too.

What a picture this is of how Jesus works with His people in meeting the need of the world. Salvation is a miracle – only through Jesus' work cannot it be known. We are to give out the **"good news"** of the gospel in obedience to Jesus' instruction. We need to keep returning to Jesus to receive more so that we can continue to give out.

There is a passage in the Old Testament of miraculous provision in the days of Elisha the prophet. Here, there is a woman who cannot provide for her family after her husband died. She was in debt and couldn't pay her creditors and