

Weekly Newsletter: 22nd October 2024

Reflection: Onward in the Service of God

By Joe Barnard

There is a striking verse in 2 Chronicles 35. We read, “He appointed the priests to their offices and encouraged them in the service of the house of the LORD”. Without making any attempt to explain the context of the passage, I want to draw out one simple observation: each of us needs to be encouraged in the service of God. If the hymn-writer summons us to move from duty to delight, it is because all too often delight lapses into duty. Spiritual service can quickly feel like nothing more than toil. To serve on door duty can feel like paying the bills; to be summoned back into the Sunday school can feel like an underserved punishment; and to receive a tea-rota notification can – if we are honest – strike the same chord in our hearts as receiving a citation for jury duty.

How do we overcome such attitudes? We all regularly need to be encouraged in the service of the Lord. Anxiety is not the only mood that weights the heart down. Tiredness can make it heavy, too. And what is the answer to such lethargy? Proverbs tells us: “a good word cheers up [the heart]”. May this reflection be a good word to every heart needing a ray of summer sunshine on a bleak Autumn afternoon.

A Good Word to Those Tired in Service

Labour is tiring; this is true in church and out of church. What can I say to those who feel exhausted in the grind of church service? Let me offer the vitamins and minerals of I Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain”. Now, the danger of reading this verse is that “not in vain” sounds like muted encouragement. It’s easy to think that the correct paraphrase would be “at least your work is not for nothing”. Frankly, such an interpretation is uninspiring.

I think there is a better way to recast the meaning. We find this in chapter three of the same letter when Paul tells us that we are able to contribute “gold, silver, and precious stones” to the great building project of God and that such efforts will result in “reward” (vs. 14). These are incredible incentives. It’s easy for us to think that our toils amount to nothing more than the imprint of a wave on sand that is erased by the next surge. Not so, says Paul. Keep your eyes on heaven and you will see the divine eye overlooks no act of charity or kindness. Our works of service are more durable than the stars in the sky. Even cup of cold dilutant juice served to children will be counted up for treasures in heaven.

A Good Word to Those Uncertain How to Serve

Perhaps there have been seasons when the church was so robust that some members could sit on the bench and wait for their numbers to be called. If so, our age is not one of them. The church in Scotland is like a rugby team that only has 10 players. There is too much need for anyone to be inactive.

My word, then, to anyone uncertain how to serve is this: just get started. There is not an aspect of church life where help is not needed. Children's ministry, youth ministry, visiting shut-ins, community engagement, AV, communications, fabric, foreign mission correspondence, prayer, set up and clean up, and the list goes on and on – all of such ministries are in need of helpers. If you have time and willingness, the opportunity surrounds you. Ask for God to open your eyes and what you will see (not just at HEC but in Scotland) is a church in rubble. This is a time when as many of us as possible need to join Nehemiah and Ezra in the work of rebuilding the temple.

A Good Word to Those Who Feel Their Season of Service Has Passed

I often hear the elderly in our congregation (and in others) lament that there is nothing left for them to do. Their strength is meagre, and they sigh in dissatisfied resignation, "I guess I can still pray". One main thing needs to say to those who are victims of this attitude. It is that we should never add "still" before prayer as if praying were the last and least and weakest of forms of service. One of the difficulties of midlife is that there is no space to breathe in the midst of responsibilities, which is to say, very little time to pray. If it is true that prayer is the engine of the church, then it is up to the oldest in the congregation to do the most important and most needed of works. All of the farmer's sowing is in vain if the rain never comes. And what is the most important thing the church can do in terms of bringing spiritual rain? Prayer is the answer. James says, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit". If revival comes to Scotland, more than likely the chief human instrument will have been the faithful and persevering prayers of elderly Christians. And if God opens up a fresh season of productive ministry at Holyrood, more than likely the most important workers in the church will have been those who took up the posture of Moses and interceded quietly on the hillside while others wielded swords in the valley.

This Sunday – Holyrood is 10!

This Sunday we're having a meal together after our morning service to mark our 10th birthday as Holyrood Evangelical Church! Please come along and let Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) know if you have any dietary requirements. Joe will be preaching on Sunday morning and Jon Gemmell will be continuing our studies in Lamentations on Sunday evening.

Home Groups

Our Home Groups are meeting this week and will meet on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month. Prayer meetings will take place on 1st, 3rd and 5th (if there is one) Wednesdays. **There will be no prayer bulletin on the Home Group weeks**, please take the opportunity to pray for one another as a small group.

If you would like to join a Home Group and aren't already in one, please contact Liz@holyroodevangelical.org.

Men's Discipleship at HEC

Do your beliefs feel like a pile of scattered papers? Do you have lingering questions about basic doctrines that never seem to be discussed? Would you like to have a confident faith, one that is built on a clear and concise statement of Biblical truth?

This Autumn we will begin a journey of studying the Westminster Confession of Faith. The hopeful outcome of our meetings will be a clearer, more confident understanding of basic Christian truth.

Option 1: HEC Building

Time: Thursdays, 11am-12pm (**starting this week - 24th October**)

Duration: 8 weeks

Option 2: Lothian Road

Time: Tuesdays

Please contact Joe if this option is of interest; he is seeking the best time and day for this option.

Women's Discipleship at HEC

We're continuing to Navigate Gospel Truth using Rebecca McLaughlin's study guide. This session we're looking at conversations Jesus had with people in the gospels and it's been an encouraging study so far. Come along on **Thursday mornings at 10.30am** and tea, coffee and scones will be provided!

Save the date – our next Ladies' Breakfast will be on **Saturday 16th November** at 9.30am.

Christmas Choir

By Norma Shippin

Christmas is coming - sooner than you think - and that means it's time for the Holyrood Christmas Choir to get practicing for the Carol Service on Sunday 15 December at 6pm.

We will practice at the end of the morning service for an hour **starting on Sunday 3rd November**. Singing in a choir is one of the great joys in life and if you would like to join you will be very welcome! You don't need to be able to read music - just be able to hold a musical line. If you would like to join just turn up at the first practice or speak to Norma or Emma to get more information.

Warm Space

Warm Space will be restarting on **Monday 4th November** from 12 noon to 3pm each week. We are still looking for some volunteers for our teams, please contact Bill Wright or Liz (Liz@holyroodevangelical.org) if you're able to help.

Dates for your diary

Here are some up and coming dates to note –

- The last session of our **Home Group Training** with Jon Gemmell will take place on Wednesday 30th October at 7pm (refreshments will be served from 6.45pm)
- Our **Mission Prayer Meeting** with Lorna, James and the Sorsamos will be on Zoom on Saturday 2nd November at 9am
- The next **Communion Service** will be on Sunday 3rd November at 10.30am
- Our next **meal before the Prayer Meeting** will be on Wednesday 6th November and we're looking forward to being joined by some of the team from the church plant in Tranent.

Handel's Messiah – 2nd January

Anncris is organising a trip to hear Handel's Messiah at the Usher Hall on **Thursday 2nd January** at 12pm. The Edinburgh Royal Choral Union will be performing it for the 137th time! Please let Anncris (anncris@gmail.com) know **by this Friday (25th October)** if you would like tickets. Everyone is welcome!

Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Home Groups meeting across the city
- Thursday:
 - Men's and Women's Bible Studies at 10.30am in the church
 - Session Meeting at 7pm in the church
- Sunday:
 - Morning service at 10.30am – Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
 - Church family meal after the service
 - Evening service at 6pm – Jon Gemmell preaching on Lamentations (live streamed)
- Monday:
 - Baby and Toddler Group at 10am
 - Women's Ministry Team Meeting at 7.30pm



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