

**SERVICE OF WORSHIP**  
**13 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**REFLECTION**

I am talking about something much deeper—namely, the fear of religion itself. I speak from experience, being strongly subject to this fear myself: I want atheism to be true and am made uneasy by the fact that some of the most intelligent and well-informed people I know are religious believers. It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that.

Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (Oxford University Press: 1997)

As the hound follows the hare, never ceasing in its running, ever drawing nearer in the chase, with unhurrying and imperturbed pace, so does God follow the fleeing soul by His Divine grace. And though in sin or in human love, away from God it seeks to hide itself, Divine grace follows after, unwearyingly follows ever after, till the soul feels its pressure forcing it to turn to Him alone in that never ending pursuit.

Francis Thompson (1893)

**CALL TO WORSHIP – PSALM 40:1-3**

Minister: I waited patiently for the LORD; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

*ALL: He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.*

Minister: He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God.

*ALL: Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD.*

**PRAYER OF ADORATION (CONCLUDED BY THE LORD'S PRAYER)**

*ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

## **ALL PEOPLE THAT ON EARTH DO DWELL**

All people that on earth do dwell,  
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;  
Him serve with fear, his praise forth-tell,  
Come ye before him and rejoice.

The Lord ye know is God indeed;  
Without our aid he did us make;  
We are his folk, he doth us feed,  
And for his sheep he doth us take.

O enter then his gates with praise,  
Approach with joy his courts unto;  
Praise, laud, and bless his name always,  
For it is seemly so to do.

For why? the Lord our God is good,  
His mercy is forever sure;  
His truth at all times firmly stood,  
And shall from age to age endure.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

*Text: v. 1-4, William Kethe, 1561, v. 5, Thomas Ken, 1674; Music: Louis Bourgeois, 1551; copyright: public domain*

## **SCRIPTURE READING – COLOSSIANS 3:1-4**

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

## **CONFESSION OF SIN**

Minister: Heavenly Father, we rejoice that we've been raised with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly places.

*ALL: Yet, we confess that we still view ourselves according to the standards of this world. We're slow to believe in the love and honor you've bestowed upon us.*

Minister: Lord, we confess that we're often preoccupied with the transitory rather than the eternal.

*ALL: Cleanse us afresh by the blood of Christ. Renew us by the power of your Spirit for your glory and our good. Amen.*

## **PRIVATE CONFESSION**

## **WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT – TITUS 3:4-7**

Minister: But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior.

*ALL: Since Christ has justified us by his grace, we are heirs to the hope of eternal life!*

## NOT WHAT MY HANDS HAVE DONE

Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul;  
Not what my toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole.  
Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God;  
Not all my prayers and sighs and tears  
Can bear my awful load.

Your voice alone, O Lord, can speak to me of grace;  
Your power alone, O Son of God, can all my sin erase.  
No other work but yours, no other blood will do;  
No strength, but that which is divine,  
Can bear me safely through.

*Refrain:*

*For you alone are my righteousness;  
Only your blood can wash me clean  
And bring me back to God.*

I bless the Christ of God; I rest on love divine;  
And with unfaltering lip and heart I call this Savior mine.  
His cross dispels each doubt; I bury in his tomb  
Each thought of unbelief and fear,  
Each lingering shade of gloom. *(Refrain)*

I praise the God of grace; I trust his truth and might;  
He calls me his, I call him mine, My God, my joy, my light.  
'Tis he who saveth me, And freely pardon gives;  
I love because he first loved me,  
I live because he lives. *(Refrain)*

*Text: Horatius Bonar, 1864; Music: Shawn and Katie Sandlin; © 2007 shawnandkatiemusic*

## SHEPHERDING PRAYER

## SCRIPTURE READING – DANIEL 5:1-6,17-30

<sup>1</sup>King Belshazzar made a great feast for a thousand of his lords and drank wine in front of the thousand. <sup>2</sup>Belshazzar, when he tasted the wine, commanded that the vessels of gold and of silver that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken out of the temple in Jerusalem be brought, that the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines might drink from them. <sup>3</sup>Then they brought in the golden vessels that had been taken out of the temple, the house of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his lords, his wives, and his concubines drank from them. <sup>4</sup>They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver, bronze, iron, wood, and stone. <sup>5</sup>Immediately the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, opposite the lampstand. And the king saw the hand as it wrote. <sup>6</sup>Then the king's color changed, and his thoughts alarmed him; his limbs gave way, and his knees knocked together.

[Just a little while later . . .] <sup>17</sup>Then Daniel answered and said before the king, "Let your gifts be for yourself, and give your rewards to another. Nevertheless, I will read the writing to the king and make known to him the interpretation. <sup>18</sup>O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. <sup>19</sup>And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. <sup>20</sup>But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him. <sup>21</sup>He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will. <sup>22</sup>And you his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, though you knew all this, <sup>23</sup>but you have lifted up yourself against the Lord of heaven. And the vessels of his house have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives, and your concubines have drunk wine from them. And you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know, but the God in whose hand is your breath, and whose are all your ways, you have not honored.

<sup>24</sup>"Then from his presence the hand was sent, and this writing was inscribed. <sup>25</sup>And this is the writing that was inscribed: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, and PARSIN. <sup>26</sup>This is the interpretation of the matter: MENE, God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end; <sup>27</sup>TEKEL, you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; <sup>28</sup>PERES, your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

<sup>29</sup>Then Belshazzar gave the command, and Daniel was clothed with purple, a chain of gold was put around his neck, and a proclamation was made about him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. <sup>30</sup>That very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed. <sup>31</sup>And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old.

# SERMON – THE WRITING ON THE WALL

## Outline:

1. Why is Belshazzar partying when there's an enemy at the gates?
2. Why is Belshazzar using the religious vessels of Israel when he's about to be swept away?
3. What's the significance of the writing on the wall?"

## Figure A.

Oh, this has gotta be the good life  
This has gotta be the good life  
This could really be a good life, good life  
Say oh, got this feeling that you can't fight  
Like this city is on fire tonight  
This could really be a good life  
A good, good life

One Republic "One Life"

## Figure B.

I had won Album of The Year at the Grammys for a second time, which I never thought was a possibility, and I remember thinking afterward, "Oh my God, that was all you wanted. Oh God, that was all you wanted! That was all you focused on." You get to the mountaintop and you look around and you're like, "Oh God, what now?"

Taylor Swift, "Miss Americana" Netflix Documentary

## Figure C.

"You're my fourth sabiyya [slave]. The other three are Muslim now. I did it for them. Yazidis are infidels – that's why we are doing this. It's to help you."

"Nadia Murad's Tale of Captivity with Islamic State,"  
*The Economist*, November 30, 2017.

## Figure D.

It was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed . . .  
but with the precious blood of Christ,

1 Peter 1:18-19

## Figure E.

You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalms 16:11

## **ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME**

All hail the power of Jesus' name!  
Let angels prostrate fall;  
Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown him Lord of all;  
Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown him Lord of all.

Ye chosen seed of Israel's race,  
Ye ransomed from the fall;  
Hail him who saves you by his grace  
And crown him Lord of all;  
Hail him who saves you by his grace  
And crown him Lord of all.

Let every kindred, every tribe  
On this terrestrial ball,  
To him all majesty ascribe,  
And crown him Lord of all;  
To him all majesty ascribe,  
And crown him Lord of all.

O that with yonder sacred throng  
We at his feet may fall!  
We'll join the everlasting song,  
And crown him Lord of all;  
We'll join the everlasting song,  
And crown him Lord of all.

*Text: Edward Perronet, 1779, John Rippon, v4, 1787; Music: Oliver Holden, 1793*

## **BENEDICTION**