

# Ultimate Security

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## Summary:

Jesus comforted His disciples, assuring them of reunion despite His impending death. Through His crucifixion and resurrection, He conquered death, offering believers enduring peace, courage, and eternal hope beyond earthly security.

## 1st hymn by C Wesley (T Richmond, Thomas Haweis 1734-1820)

- 1) O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise  
the glories of our god and King, the triumphs of his grace!
- 2) Jesus the name that charms our fears, that bids our sorrows cease,  
'tis music in the sinner's ears, 'tis life, and health, and peace.
- 3) He breaks the power of cancelled sin, he sets the prisoner free,  
his blood can make the foulest clean, his blood availed for me.
- 4) He speaks and listening to his voice new life the dead receive,  
the mournful broken hearts rejoice, the humble poor believe.
- 5) Hear him, ye deaf; his praise ye dumb, your loosened tongues employ;  
ye blind behold your Saviour come, and leap ye lame for joy.
- 6) My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,  
to spread through all the earth abroad the honours of Thy name.

## Prayer:

Dear Father, we ask you to meet us in this time of worship, knowing that you receive our worship and hear our prayers. We ask that you lead us by your Spirit, and we make our requests in the name of our Lord and saviour, Amen.

## 2nd hymn: by J Edmeston (T Mannheim, F Filitz 1804-76)

- 1) Lead us heavenly Father lead us o'er the world's tempestuous sea;  
guard us, guide us, keep us, feed us, for we have no help but Thee,  
yet possessing every blessing if our God our Father be.
- 2) Saviour, breathe forgiveness o'er us; all our weakness Thou dost know;  
Thou didst tread this earth before us, Thou didst feel its keenest woe;  
lone and dreary, faint and weary, through the desert Thou didst go.
- 3) Spirit of our God, descending, fill our hearts with heavenly joy,  
love with every passion blending, pleasure that can never cloy:  
thus provided, pardoned, guided, nothing can our peace destroy.

## Readings:

- Isaiah 53:3-6
- John 14: 1-9a

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## Intercessions:

Dear heavenly Father,

Thank you for the priceless privilege we enjoy in thus addressing you, for we have come to know you only because your Son, our Lord introduced us in this way.

We have been encouraged by St Paul to pray for those in authority over us, knowing that they are given such authority by you. Thank you for them, and we pray for your wisdom and discerning to be given them as they lead us.

We pray for the places where trouble rages, such as Ukraine, asking you for your wisdom and strength to be given to them as they defend their country against their aggressive neighbours. We pray also for the Middle East and the war currently raging in that land. We pray for wisdom and your personal strengthening of all those who look to you for your guidance. Help them to follow righteousness and justice, and bring a cessation of hostilities. Be merciful to those who are in physical or mental suffering.

We pray for all who are ill, lonely, or depressed - grant that they might know in some measure the peace that only you can give.

And in all things, let your will be done, Father, for we ask these prayers in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, the Christ, Amen.

## 3rd hymn: by C Wesley (Blaenwern, W Rowlands)

- 1) Love divine , all loves excelling, joy of heaven to earth come down,  
fix in us Thy humble dwelling, all thy faithful mercies crown;  
Jesu, Thou art all compassion, pure unbounded love Thou art,  
visit us with Thy salvation, enter every trembling heart.
- 2) Come, Almighty, to deliver, let us all Thy life receive;  
suddenly return and never, never more Thy temples leave;  
Thee we would be always blessing, serve Thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise Thee without ceasing, glory in Thy perfect love.
- 3) Finish then Thy new creation, pure and spotless let us be,  
Let us see Thy great salvation, perfectly restored in Thee:  
Changed from glory into glory, till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before Thee, lost in wonder, love, and praise.

## Address: Ultimate Security

Jesus was speaking to a group of rather frightened disciples in our reading.

He had just celebrated the Passover with his disciples, his last act before He would be betrayed to the Jewish leaders who were intent on getting rid of Him. And the disciples knew that they wanted to kill him – so did most of the people. And here he was – in the city that “kills the prophets and stones those who were sent to it” as Jesus had told them with great sadness. (Matt 23:37) Jesus was a Prophet, so they would have expected big trouble at any moment. Jesus knew their fear, and gave them some good news to sustain them through the

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coming trial, which he understood, and they didn't. They would be gathered *again* to where He would be with them: it would be wonderful. He was going to prepare something special for them. At this juncture, Judas had gone. This was an intimate occasion, a tender moment, between this special Master and those who had lived with him for 3 years. In the midst of their fear there was a coming *certainty* (He spoke of it in that way), that would have given them a pang of delight, to help settle their fear of the moment.

So many people over 2000 years since that night have read or heard these words and been hugely comforted. They too identify as His disciples. His enemies, the leaders or the Roman authorities, or whoever else in their imagination fuelled that fear, were not going to have the last word – that would be *Jesus'* privilege. Do you know those words?

The disciples had been afraid ever since Jesus "set his face to go to Jerusalem". He knew exactly what he was going to – it was *they* who were unsettled with almost a nameless fear. This place was dangerous, and these men from Galilee were uncomfortable here in the big city.

Many of us are afraid of the future. We all know 2 things in life cannot be avoided. The taxes we accept as OK. Death – well that is unavoidable, but *not OK* to the natural man. I was a Surgeon at Flinders for the major part of my working life. I started 3 months before Flinders Medical Centre opened in 1976, 12 years after I became a doctor. I treated thousands of patients: I saw hundreds die! I looked into their faces as I had to tell them bad news about their diagnosis, and I saw – the *fear of death!* In their eyes! St Paul called it the "last enemy of man". The constant one. The final one. I believe it!

Jesus faced it at the stage of our reading tonight.

But I have learned that the fear of death does not have to monopolise us. I learned that as a teenager and it has helped me in a life's work of practice. I came to believe that Jesus came to free me, and all of us, from the fear of death.

Having taught the truth of his Father, and freed many from their illnesses and the power of Satan, he was taken by the authorities, who, out of envy and because he confronted them with *their own* guilt and wickedness, put him through a mock trial, (we would call it a "kangaroo court"), condemned him to death by crucifixion in order to get rid of him. The Roman Governor was complicit in the deception - he *knew* it was out of envy and hatred they had brought him to trial, he knew that the person charged was innocent, and he evaded his responsibility. But none of them knew there was another reason, an astounding one – it was His *Father's plan*, a fulfillment of the prophecies of the OT of the suffering servant.

All the powers of hell were converging on this, pushing for the extinction of their greatest threat, this uncompromising Holy Son of God, intent on saving lost humanity. This was *the* titanic battle, evil's best chance to oust him. And on that Cross as the sinless Son of God bore the sin of the world on behalf of those who would have been crushed and killed by it, the evil powers threw everything they had against him.

No human being is capable of fully understanding that horror and darkness which assailed the pure spirit of the Holy Son. He bore it to the end, "tasting death for every man", in the limbo of the lost, the hell where we should have been, *for us*, the worst sin that human and

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evil powers could ever carry out – DEICIDE - became in the hands of a Holy God the greatest act of salvation that has occurred since time began.

*Only God could do that!* The powers of evil would have never foreseen that. And the proof of what he had achieved was that death – the last enemy of man – could not hold *Him*. It had been robbed of its stranglehold over humanity.

The scriptures put it very simply “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, and raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to many, to Peter, then the twelve...then by more than 500 at once”, most of whom were still alive at the time Paul wrote those words.

Jesus made other promises to them about the coming of the Spirit, who would empower them to witness to Him as Saviour, and to tell the world the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Then he ascended out of their sight. Their delight was beyond explanation, by anything other than that this was the truth. And the rest, as they say, is history. We now live in 2024 A.D. – “anno Domini”, the year of our Lord.

I have known many patients with severe illnesses come to know the truth of this gospel, even as they faced the likelihood that they would not live a great deal longer – their cancer was not curable. And then I have seen them die without any fear at all. It was triumphant!

I will tell you about an old man I operated on when no one else was "game". I wonder now how I had the courage!

I used to perform a “trans-oesophagectomy”, especially in older people, in an attempt to avoid opening the chest. I would dissect the stomach, then so that its blood supply was all from the lower end of the stomach only, and the body and upper end were all mobile.

Then I would dissect through the hiatus of the diaphragm the lower portion of the oesophagus under direct vision. Then I would dissect the rest of the gullet right up into the neck by feel only – I could see my fingers under the skin of the neck, behind the thyroid gland, having pushed them up “blind” from the abdominal cavity. It used to upset the anaesthetist a bit – my hand alongside the heart would compress it a bit, as it thumped away against my arm. If the heart was not filling well during the compression, the anaesthetist would ask me to give him respite, and let the blood pressure pick up again. It was high risk, but I did it many times, and it would save a lot of blood loss and post-operative pain. Then I would open the neck, divide the upper gullet, pull the gullet down into the abdomen, take it off the stomach, then pull the stomach back up into the neck, elongating it into a long tube, which I then connected to the residual gullet. Hey presto – the gullet was removed and chest intact.

One man was 85, and I wondered if he could survive the procedure. I told him “you may not survive”. The alternative was slowly choking on his saliva, and not being able to swallow. He said: “Doc, I am a Christian. If you succeed and I survive I will be delighted. If I don’t survive, don’t you be concerned because I won’t be. To be with the Lord will be *even better*. I am not afraid. My son is a pastor and hundreds of people will be praying for me AND you! So don’t you worry either!” Can you imagine what that does for one’s confidence?

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He survived. So did the Anaesthetist! I saw the worry lines disappear from his face. Can you see how important were the unseen factors in that situation.

All that was true, and the fact of what Jesus did is true. Millions over 2000 years have received that truth, with great joy, and lost their fear of death. To hear and receive that truth will give you a security that nothing else can. Because there is no security in the things we once may have trusted in – our law and order, our police, our social welfare system, our education, our superannuation, our modern medicine. None of these can really secure us. Only a living Saviour, who secured our release from the “last enemy of man”. So trust Him, for God is good. His steadfast love endures for ever.

Amen

### 4th hymn: M Luther (T Ein' Feste Burg, M Luther 1483-1546)

- 1) A safe stronghold our God is still, a trusty shield and weapon;  
He'll help us clear from all the ill that hath now o'ertaken.  
The ancient prince of hell hath risen with purpose fell:  
Strong mail of craft and power he weareth in this hour, on earth is not his equal.
- 2) With force of arms we nothing can, full soon we are down-ridden;  
But for us fights the proper Man, which God Himself hath bidden.  
Ask ye who is this same? Christ Jesus is his name,  
The Lord Sabbaoth's Son; He and no other one, shall conquer in the battle.
- 3) And were this world all devils o'er, and watching to devour us,  
we lay it not to heart so sore; not they can overpower us.  
And let the prince of ill look grim as e'er he will,  
he harms us not a whit; for why his doom is writ; a word shall quickly slay him.
- 4) God's word for all their craft and force, one moment will not linger,  
but spite of hell shall have its course; 'tis written by His finger.  
And though they take our life, goods, honour, children, wife,  
yet is their profit small; these things shall vanish all; the city of God remaineth.

### Benediction:

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

*This service was prepared by Neil McIntosh (M.B.B.S. F.R.A.C.S.) for HopeNet SA*