

My Times Are in His Hands

It was **Christmas**, 1939, and **Great Britain** was at war with **Nazi Germany**. Like his father before him, **King George VI** would continue the holiday tradition of addressing the British Empire in a live radio message. That year, he would broadcast from the royal country house at **Sandringham**, where he and his family would spend Christmas.

Taking a few deep breaths, he began to speak, slowly yet solidly. Measuring his words carefully, he spoke from the heart:

“A new year is at hand. We cannot tell what it will bring. If it brings peace, how thankful we shall all be. If it brings us continued struggle we shall remain undaunted.”

Toward the end of his nine-minute broadcast, he said:

“I feel that we may all find a message of encouragement in the lines which, in my closing words, I would like to say to you:”

He then read from a poem given to him by his 13-year-old daughter, **Princess Elizabeth**,

“I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year,

‘Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.’

And he replied, ‘Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the Hand of God.

That shall be better than light, and safer than a known way.’”*

He finished by saying,

“May that Almighty Hand guide and uphold us all.”

For a king not known for compelling speeches, this one would be a landmark. It united King and Country in common cause and inspired the people to hold fast. After all, at this point in history, no one knew that the Allies would triumph. Britain was to face five more years of war and brutal bombing by **Hitler** before the day of liberation would arrive. The end of 1939 was a shaky time and great leadership by King, Queen, and **Prime Minister Winston Churchill** would hold Britain steady against the Nazi aggressors.

These are inspiring words for us also as we begin a new year, “May that Almighty Hand guide and uphold us all”.

We also are living in changing and tumultuous times with unprecedented events happening around the world, war, natural disasters, climate change and what we once felt to be secure has moved. But as Christians we recognise that the storm may blow but our anchor is grounded firm and deep in the Saviour's love. That's been the teaching of the Boys' Brigade since 1883.

In Psalm 31 the psalmist is having an horrendous time – nothing is going right – the world is against him and he feels dejected and at his lowest ebb.

But in v 14, he stops, he breathes deeply and he catches a new perspective to his situation and like King George VI, he says, “But, I trust in you, O Lord, I say, you are my God. My times are in your hands...”

In the words of King George, “A new year is at hand. We cannot tell what it will bring. If it brings peace, how thankful we shall all be. If it brings us continued struggle, we shall remain undaunted.”

Today, I want to encourage you to put your hand in the hand of the Almighty, and go out into a new year, knowing that that shall be better than light and safer than a known way.

Firstly, put your hand into the hand of the Almighty by praying. “More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of” wrote Tennyson.

1. Tell God exactly how you feel – when times are challenging and you cannot see a way forward, invite God into the situation with you. Tell him how you feel, pour your heart to him.

In the Bible there is a book called Job about a man called Job. It is reckoned the oldest book in the Bible dealing with the oldest subject, why do good people suffer.

The prophet Job, who suffered so much in his life, losing his health, wealth and family, yet, he could say to God in the midst of his sorrow, “I can't be quiet any longer! I am angry and bitter. I have to speak”.

He said, “Oh for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house.

The lesson from Job is that God can handle our doubts, our anger and fear, our grief, confusion and questions. He invites to lay before him all our problems.

Because when you bring your situation to God, you are not denying Him, you are in fact saying, "I believe in you, but help my unbelief, help me in my fear".

Jesus also showed us that we should bring to God all our fears and our doubts; it was not always on a mountain top that he displayed his closeness to God, it was in a garden of tears where he said, "Take this cup of suffering from me" and on the cross, "Why have you abandoned me".

He told his Father exactly how he felt, he hid nothing back and we find this time and time again in the scriptures, they bring their feelings to God.

God wants us to pour our hearts out to him, he is there to receive us because we are his children. God is more than able to receive your complaints and know that he still loves us in the midst of our fears.

So, this new year, remember, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all sins and griefs to bear, what a privilege it is to carry everything to God in prayer".

2. As we step into the darkness of a new year remember to **Focus on God's unchanging nature.**

When Job's life was falling apart, he remembered who God was and what he meant to him.

He said, "That God is good and loving. That God is all powerful. That God notices every detail of his life. That God is in control. That God has a plan for his life. That God will save him".

These are all statements of faith! So, as we walk out into a new year remember God's unchanging nature; remember what he has revealed to you through his Son Jesus. God came into this world to tell us that

he loves us; in fact the psalmist grasped the immensity of God's love, when he wrote, in Psalm 103,

“The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
 slow to anger, abounding in love.
⁹ He will not always accuse,
 nor will he harbour his anger forever;
¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve
 or repay us according to our iniquities.
¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
 so great is his love for those who fear him;
¹² as far as the east is from the west,
 so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
¹³ As a father has compassion on his children,
 so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed,
 he remembers that we are dust.
¹⁵ The life of mortals is like grass,
 they flourish like a flower of the field;
¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone,
 and its place remembers it no more.
¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting
 the LORD’s love is with those who fear him,
 and his righteousness with their children’s children—
¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant
 and remember to obey his precepts.

This psalmist remembered and focussed on God's unchanging nature.

The great hymn sums it up.

“To all life thou givest, to both great and small;
 in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
 we blossom and flourish, like leaves on the tree,
 then wither and perish; but nought changeth thee.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
 thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;

all laud we would render: O help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

As we journey into a new year, I encourage you to put your hand into His and focus on God' unchanging nature.

3. **Trust God to keep his promises** – We have a God who makes covenants and promises and keeps them, a God who paints his promises in the sky for us all to see, every time you see a rainbow remember God's promises and the Bible is full of God's promises – one of the greatest I think is at the end of the gospel of Matthew, where Jesus says to his disciples, “I will be with you always even to the end of time”.

When we read the scriptures, we encounter the promises of God.

What's your new year's resolution? Have you made one?

Perhaps a good one would be to remember the promises of God, and there is only way to do this, and that's to constantly refer to the Bible, for the Bible is where we find God's promises to be true.

The hymn by Rev George Matheson of the Church of Scotland says it all,

“O Joy that seekest me through pain
I cannot close my heart to Thee
I trace the rainbow through the rain
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be.”

The original words were “I stand on the rainbow through the rain” but it was changed because someone said, “how can you stand on a rainbow?” but they missed what George Matheson was really saying, he was saying stand on the promises of God..stand on the rainbow.

Circumstances cannot change the character of God. God's grace is still in full force. He is still with you even when you don't feel it.

Job clung onto the promises of God, he stood on the rainbow, at his lowest he could say, "I have not departed from the commands of your lips; I have treasured the words of your mouth more than my daily bread".

This trust in God's word and promises helped Job to remain faithful, even though nothing made sense. His faith was strong in the midst of pain. He cried out, "God may kill me, but still, I will trust him".

Someone wrote, "When you feel abandoned by God yet continue to trust him in spite of your feelings, you worship him in the deepest way".

4. Finally, put your hand into his by remembering what God has already done for you.

Today in our scripture reading, we see that Jesus's ministry is entering a difficult and challenging phase – he was staying around Galilee, because he knew that if he went to Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders would kill him.

The Jewish Festival of Tabernacles was coming close – an historical feast, its main characteristic is the requirement of Israel's people to leave their homes and to dwell in temporary shelters or booths. The Jews built these booths (temporary shelters) to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt and their protection, provision, and care by the hand of God during their 40 years in the wilderness.

Jesus' brothers were trying to persuade him to go up to Jerusalem, so that the people in Jerusalem, would see who he really was; they wanted him to show his works to the world, but Jesus was reluctant and said twice "My time has not yet come". Jesus knew that the world soon would see his works but his time had not yet come.

John adds a rather challenging aspect of the story – "Even his own brothers did not believe in him".

Then Jesus decides to go privately to the festival, under cover.

Our Christian faith hinges on Jesus going to Jerusalem. If he never went, and hid away in Galilee, there would be no cross, therefore no forgiveness.

Jesus knew that his visit to Jerusalem would lead to his Cross. He knew that it would happen at the right time. He knew that his Cross would be significant; it would be a sacrifice of the highest order. Jesus could have saved himself from the Cross by staying in Galilee, but then if he did that, he could not have saved you and me”.

Words cannot even begin to describe the darkness of that moment. Why did God allow such a ghastly thing to happen? Why? Why?

Well, the Cross tells us that Jesus made our peace with God; the Cross tells us that he went to hell for us, so that we would never spend one minute in hell – hell is simply separation from God's love – The Cross tells us, that “Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that in union with him, we might share the righteousness of God.

Jesus gave up everything, so you and I could have everything!

So on this first Sunday of the year, I encourage us all to step out in to the unknown, into the darkness, putting our hand into the hand of God and when we do, we will know, that this shall be better than light, and safer than a known way for we will be led by the one who claimed to be the light of the world. When we walk with Christ, in the light of his word, what a glory he sheds on our way and whatever 2025 will bring us, be it joy or sorrow, know that you don't go alone but One greater than you is with you.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Amen