



### Readings for this week:

Monday	Reading Matt 3:1–4:11 Pray for Heather Critchley
Tuesday	Reading Matt 4:12–5:12 Pray for Elouise Critchley
Wednesday	Reading Matt 5:13–37 Pray for Colin Dunbar & family
Thursday	Reading Matt 5:38–6:15 Pray for a person of your choosing
Friday	Reading Matt 6:16–7:6 Pray for Sue & Bill Ellis
Saturday	Reading: Catch up Pray for Phil Evans and family
<b>Sunday 10 January 2021</b>	Reading Matt 7:7–29 Pray for Peter Evans & family

### Prayers:

We pray for all who join us in our 'Renewal of our Covenant with the Lord God Almighty', our first Sunday service of the New Year 2021.

We ask for the Lord's blessing of *health* and *happiness* upon everyone we know in our church, and other family and community circles.

We pray for our Kids Church; also the *education* of all school children this month, particularly when many may not be able to attend their regular classes.

Our prayers for those returning to work, those searching for employment; those living on their own, and those struggling financially during these difficult times.

We remember *Mick, Debbie & Mikey Kane*, and those who pray for us.

Welcome to our first church service of 2021! We so quickly say 'goodbye' to one year and welcome in another New Year. Our minds are probably on lots of other things just now, seemingly pulled in different directions and it feels hard to prioritize the 'number one' thing. If one hundred people were chosen at random to name the greatest priority of the moment, I dare say we would have many varied replies.

What about us this morning, as we come to the first Sunday service of a New Year; what comes *first* before anything else just now? As most will know, it has been our tradition at Brooklands for many years to start each new year with a liturgy of the 'Renewal of our Covenant with God Almighty'. This is a key part of our spiritual gathering. Ordinarily, we would be all together in our sanctuary. We would follow the order of service and conclude with the congregation standing together as one, as we commit our lives, and another year, to God Almighty.

I hope that for you this annual commitment helps to set the New Year off on a sound footing. It is a good time to feel again that *forgiveness* which comes only from the Lord, an opportunity to start over *afresh* with our hearts and minds on fire for Him alone. It is part of our Wesleyan heritage and we continue it this morning. As you follow and join this part of our whole-hearted commitment to God, there is a serious and sombre note where together we will say the following,

*I am no longer my own but yours. Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will; put me to doing, put me to suffering; let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you, exalted for you, or brought low for you; Let me be full, let me be empty, let me have all things, let me have nothing: I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed LORD, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen*

It will be good to think about these words before we say them together on Sunday during our service. I believe I am correct in saying that this is the number one need of this hour. It is true that 'the good can be the enemy of the best'. There are so many good and wholesome things in our lives just now, but by far the greatest at the outset of a New Year is our gaze upon God Almighty; we do this by looking to the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Blessings to all our readers on this first Lord's Day of 2021.**

**Grace and peace!**



**Message:** *The Gate of the Year*

**Readings:** Psalm 62: Matthew 7: 24-28

It was several years ago that I first mentioned the poem partially quoted by King George VI on his Christmas Day radio broadcast in 1939. World War 2 had begun a few months earlier and things looked rather bleak. We are now at another 'Gate of the Year', and it seemed prudent to me to consider how God's promises work with those who have Hope & Faith in the Lord God.

When I investigated the poem partially quoted by the father of our present sovereign, Queen Elizabeth II, it proved to be written by someone completely unknown to all but a few, and I discovered the following two scriptural gems of truth which bear an uncanny resemblance to life in today's world. The first is...

**1) Humble origins**

It is a remarkable observation found in many great sources of strength in the Bible. Moses, Samuel, David, Nehemiah, Peter, John and even Jesus Himself!

The poet's name was Minnie Louise Haskins, and she was born in the village of Oldland, six miles east of Bristol. She grew up in the neighbouring village of Warmley. Her father, Joseph, was a grocer, and her mother was called Louisa Bridges. Later, her father acquired a pottery business making drainpipes. She taught Sunday School for many years in a Congregationalist church. She went on to study informally at University College, Bristol while undertaking voluntary work for her local church. By 1903, she was working in Lambeth, London, for the *Springfield Hall Wesleyan Methodist Mission*. In 1907, she departed for Madras, India with *the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society*.

In 1912, Minnie Haskins published a small volume of poetry entitled, *The Desert*, which included the poem "*God Knows*", originally written in 1908, to which she added the now-famous preamble to create the poem that today is commonly known as '*The Gate of the Year*'! There is no link between this poem by Minnie Haskins and Psalm 62 written by King David save the sense of trust you have in the opening words of both... In Psalm 62, David writes,

*"My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I shall never be shaken."* (Psalm 62:1-2)

Here is the beginning of the poem written by Minnie Haskins, and quoted by King George VI on his Christmas Address to the nation in 1939... *And 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 to you better than light and safer than a known way."*

I couldn't help but think of similarity between this last stanza from her poem, and Psalm 62...

*'Then rest: until God moves to lift the veil From our impatient eyes,*

*When, as the sweeter features Of Life's stern face we hail,*

*Fair beyond all surmise God's thought around His creatures*

*Our mind shall fill.'*

Then I read the opening lines of Ps 62: *"My soul finds rest in God alone; my salvation comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I shall never be shaken."* (Psalm 62:1-2)

Both writers come from '*humble*' origins; for David was a shepherd boy when God was preparing him for his great exploits of later years. And Minnie Haskins, a *mere Sunday School teacher* and *Missionary* to India. Yet something she had written and subsequently paid little attention to, *became significant words from a King in time of national tribulation!* TWO WORDS ring out still, following nine months of a global pandemic. The words succinctly put are these...

**2. God Knows!**

Friends you need to hear these words – they are true for you, and each of us, today. God knows what is going on. He knows ALL that is happening everywhere. Did anything take you by surprise this past year? The Lord God knew it all! *He is the Alpha and the Omega*. He knows the beginning from the end...

In a later Psalm, 139, King David had been considering God's thoughts and Presence and Plans, and he concludes:

*"Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain."* (Psalm 139:6)

David ends the Psalm, '*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.*' Friends, God knows about ALL your thoughts and concerns! God Knows!



So then, at the beginning of 2021, to quote this remarkable poem, 'put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way.'

These words became the high point of the King's Address to our nation when all seemed hopeless. They are not 'inspired words' as the Bible is '*God Breathed*'; but, inspiring to our nation they were. And they continue to inspire too.

I trust everything we have done and said this morning has inspired you. ***The Renewal*** of our Covenant with God Almighty, taken from the old Wesleyan New Year Tradition of re-affirming our promises to God together publicly. ***The Breaking of bread*** together, which we shall do in a moment. And ***the declaration of the Gospel of God*** through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour!

Their contexts speak volumes to us! God knows it is true that from Humble Origins, inspiring words and exploits have risen to **Help, Save, Redeem**, and **offer Hope** for each year we live.

Here was an unlikely King, for he never did want his brother Edward VIII to abdicate and leave him as heir to the Throne.

Here was an unlikely poem from an unlikely source to give a nation Hope against what seemed an all powerful, unbeatable enemy.

It was a mere nine-minute address to the nation. He stated: "it is the tragedy of this time that there are powerful countries whose whole direction and policy are based on aggression and the suppression of all that we hold dear for mankind." He addressed the soldiers, sailors and airmen to remain strong and undaunted!

Then came humble words from an unknown writer of a poem. *Words that spoke of faith in the One who knows all...*

*And 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 to you better than light and safer than a known way."*

King George VI concluded his speech with this blessing: "***May that Almighty Hand guide and uphold us all.***" To which I add, may our hand be in His. Amen.