

**Trust in the Lord, not the multitude**  
Isaiah 31:1-6 and Ephesians 2:1-5;8-10

Good morning and welcome to worship on this beautiful Lord's day. It is so amazing to once again be gathered together around the word of the Lord – whether you're in the church building, at home on the couch, outside in the garden or even laying in the comfort of your bed, we are all together in the presence of the Lord, united in the Risen Christ, and part of His universal body which is the church of God. To that end, our call to worship is taken from **Romans 12:4-5** and **Hebrews 10:24-25**:

***“For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others... And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”***

Let us pray:

Opening Song - In Christ Alone: [In Christ Alone \(My Hope Is Found\) - Adrienne Liesching | LYRICS VIDEO - YouTube](#)

During the reign of the Assyrian Empire, one thing became abundantly clear to all the surrounding, and particularly the smaller, nations – this was a force not to be taken lightly. Their reign stretched from the tip of the Persian Gulf (modern day Kuwait) north to the top of Iraq, west into modern day Turkey, south including Syria, Cyprus, Jordan and well into Egypt. And what we can safely say is that no nation on earth would be able to capture so much land, especially within the ancient world, without being violent and ruthless. Now of course we don't have time to get into the details about the power, authority or means by which the Assyrians created such a vast empire, but it is clear to see that this nation was incredibly fierce and not to be messed with.

We read from **Isaiah 31:1-6**:

**“<sup>1</sup> Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, who rely on horses, who trust in the multitude of their chariots and in the great strength of their horsemen, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel, or seek help from the LORD. <sup>2</sup> Yet he too is wise and can bring disaster; he does not take back his words. He will rise up against that wicked nation, against those who help evildoers.**

**<sup>3</sup> But the Egyptians are mere mortals and not God; their horses are flesh and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, those who help will stumble, those who are helped will fall; all will perish together. <sup>4</sup> This is what the LORD says to me: “As a lion growls, a great lion over its prey— and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against it, it is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamour— so the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights.**

**<sup>5</sup> Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will ‘pass over’ it and will rescue it.” <sup>6</sup> Return, you Israelites, to the One you have so greatly revolted against.”**

This particular warning comes to the Israelites during a time when certain nations from Aram and Canaan sought the help of the Egyptians to stand against the Assyrian army and much like today, it was made possible only by the forming of alliances – it comes by way of swearing an allegiance to the most powerful nation, in this case, Egypt, possibly with the offering of precious items to buy loyalty, it may come by way of submitting fully to the culture, beliefs, religion and even rule, amongst other things, of the most powerful nation. In essence, this, in my opinion, would have amounted to the trading of one cruel empire for another, especially knowing what the Egyptians were capable of. And what makes this so remarkable though, is that the nations from Aram and Canaan were not the only ones to join in on this alliance seeking mission for help from the Egyptians.

It would seem as though the Israelites, having lived under the rule of the Assyrians for quite some time at this point, were seeking to be part of this allegiance with the Egyptians – seeking the help of a vast and powerful army with many horsemen and chariots. Now one would, again, in my opinion, be justified in assuming that at this point, the Israelites either forgot about their past encounter with the Egyptians or, that they simply chose at this point to ignore their history.

The Book of Exodus offers us a great reminder of what life was like for the Israelites while in Egypt – when the Israelites first settled in Egypt, it wasn't all bad. In fact, they were given royal permission to settle there, to farm the lands, to live in peace with the Egyptian people. The nation continued to grow and multiply just as the Lord had promised Abraham and as He commanded in the Garden of Eden; however, this would not last. Pharaoh, sensing that the Israelites had grown to vast in number and now posing a real threat to their national security, resorted to, as **Ex 1:10** says, “*shrewd*” actions – enslaving the nation, putting them to degrading work, and even engaging in infanticide to reduce the population. Exodus uses a number of terms and phrases to describe the situation – “*working them ruthless*”, “*making their lives bitter*”, “*hard and cruel service*”, “*the nation languished in misery, in suffering and in broken spirits*”.

Fear has such a powerful way of making people do things though, things that are not necessarily good for them, things that have no benefit for them whatsoever. For fear of facing the wrath of the Assyrian army, for fear of being destroyed, for fear of having to submit to this foreign, violent and cruel power, they turn to simply a different foreign, violent and cruel power – yet it is a power that they are somewhat familiar with. Because isn't it much easier to face what we know rather than face something new? I mean we do this all the time. When the time comes to make a change, whether it is a change we want or a change that we don't, it is so tempting to return to what we know, or in the very least, to stay exactly where we are because it's comfortable, because it's easy, because it's familiar. The issue that we face today is one of self-reliance, the issue of relying solely on the world to fulfil our needs. We can easily come to terms with our weaknesses, though there are times where we may not like to admit it – but when we do, what or rather, who is it that we turn to?

Like the Israelites, have we forgotten all that the Lord has done for us in His great plan of redemption and salvation? Have we chosen to ignore that because we find it easier to rely on ourselves or to rely on the world in our times of need and of struggle rather than relying on the Lord? As the prophet Isaiah makes known to the nation, it is a futile endeavour. Relying on the Egyptians for salvation, for redemption, for liberation is of no value because they are mere mortals. They are flesh and bone, not of spirit.

What is truly amazing is that we too were, and at times, still are, no different. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:1-3:

**“<sup>1</sup> As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.**

By nature, we were no better off than those who sought the help of foreign rulers. By nature, we were no better off than those who made alliances with earthly powers, trusting in them, the multitude, for security. We were once part of the disobedient, we were once a part of those who lived in the world, following the desires its desires and its thoughts. As Paul says, like the rest, we were by nature, deserving of wrath. But he adds this, from verse 3 onwards:

**<sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.**

**<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”**

You have probably heard this phrase on many occasions, we are in the world but not of the world. It is true and such a joyous understanding for us as believers in Christ Jesus. Salvation has come to us through Him, life has been given to us because of His sacrifice – it did not come to us because of our self-reliance, not because we created alliances with others who seem to be more powerful and authoritative than ourselves, it did not come because we submitted ourselves completely to a foreign power and it did not come to us because we were deserving of it. It is by the work of the Lord in us – the same God who redeemed Israel from the bonds of slavery in Egypt, the same God who provided manna from heaven and water from the rock, the same God who led them into the Promised Land, the same God who healed the sick, raised the dead to life. He is the same God who bore our punishment for our sins, giving us hope, grace and mercy.

When fear strikes, and it seems like all is lost, may the Lord of Eternity grant you an everlasting peace. Trust in Him for all things and He will make straight your path, rely on Him, for He has given you salvation.

Let us pray.

Song of Praise - God of all my days: [Casting Crowns - God of All My Days \(Official Lyric Video\) - YouTube](#)

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