

“The Saviour, the Spirit, and Superheroes”

31 May 2020 - Led by Sunday Special & K2

Welcome & Call to Worship:

Good morning everyone. It is wonderful to worship with you on this very special Sunday! I use the word “special” for two reasons. 1: This morning’s service will be led by the children and teachers of Sunday Special and K2. At the end of each school year, we take time to publicly acknowledge the important place children hold in our community by hearing what they have been learning about the Lord Jesus, His Word and the Christian faith, and to recognize that as God speaks to us through others, He is by no means restricted by age. 2: Today, we celebrate Pentecost, the pouring out of the promised Holy Spirit on the disciples ten days after Christ had ascended into heaven, their courageous proclamation of the gospel to people from every nation, and the amazing work of the Spirit as approximately three thousand people were baptised that very day! You might call it the birthday of the church, and you can read the entire story in Acts 2. It is the beautiful, marvelous story we have been studying in Ephesians brought to life. Though once dead in sin, God in His grace made them alive in Christ, breathing new life into them by His Spirit, the Breath of God. Their story is our story too, and Paul urges us to praise the LORD for this gift of grace and every other spiritual blessing we now have in Christ. So as we begin our service today with Lovely Noise, a song we’ve been learning this month in Sunday Special, hear the call of the psalmist:

Reading: Psalm 150

Praise: Lovely Noise

Prayers of Adoration and Confession:

Let us pray. O God, our Heavenly Father, You rule over all nations with Your unfailing love and mercy. You are our bread of life, Your name is powerful and You are our everlasting joy. Lord, You are worthy of our praise and we adore You. Although we do not deserve Your forgiveness and grace, Lord, You remain faithful. Although we have failed You so many times, in so many ways Lord, You have never turned Your back on us. Forgive our sins, Lord, open the eyes of our hearts today, so that we can see You clearly, we can see all the good things that You are doing in our lives. Fill our hearts with love for one another and let us grow in Your faith, so that we can know You better. Thank you, Lord, for listening to our prayer, thank you for Your forgiveness, for Your love and for Your grace. Thank you for being our rock to stand on, and for reminding us that everything we need is found in You. So, as we present our end of year Virtual Children’s Service today, Lord, we ask for Your Holy Spirit to be at work. Lord, open our ears to receive Your Word and our hearts to welcome You. Guide and lead our thoughts so that we would hear Your voice and make us more like You.

And now let us join together in saying the Lord’s Prayer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Prime Time Investigates: Superheroes

Thanks Jane. Our world today loves superheroes! They appear everywhere - comic books and video games, toys and t-shirts, television and cinema. So, for the past year, we have been

investigating the Gospel story through the lens of superheroes, learning to see, understand and explain the good news about Jesus in a language our friends and peers might find more familiar. What were the results of our investigation? Let's go to Paige and Jake in the newsroom to find out what we've discovered.

Part 1: Becoming A Superhero

(Paige and Jake sitting at a news desk)

Paige: Good morning and welcome to this special edition of "Prime Time Investigates". I'm Paige Turner.

Jake: And I'm Jake Goodreader.

Paige: This morning's programme is all about *superheroes!*

Jake: But not your ordinary caped-crusader type superhero that rescues damsels in distress or lifts cars with a little finger.

Paige: No! Today we're investigating how ordinary people can become superheroes of the Christian faith.

Jake: And we'll examine God's Word for instructions about how to live as a follower of Jesus.

Paige: We are absolutely delighted to have two special guests making up our panel this morning. So welcome Tim and Rick. Thank you both for agreeing to take part in this special programme today.

Jake: We'll also have a team of time-travelling reporters on standby to get all the information you'll need, so let's get started!

Paige: First, let's go over to Pap Arattsi, who is our Religious Affairs Correspondent. Pap, we're starting with you because you have managed to track down some famous Bible heroes of the faith. I know these people are very highly regarded and in fact, I believe some of them have even made it into the Faith Hall of Fame. What have you discovered?

(Pap and guests on location)

Pap: Well, Paige, I wanted to find out what is it that made these heroes so heroic? Was it their age, their appearance, their status, their wealth, their personality, or their physique? Did they have special powers? Or was it God working in them as they obeyed Him? Who better to tell me than these heroes themselves. So without further ado, let's meet some of them and hear about their experiences.

Noah: Hello. My name is Noah. One day God asked me to do something very strange: He told me to build a ship in the middle of dry land. He said that he was going to send rain down that would flood the whole earth but anyone inside my ship would be safe. I trusted God with all my heart and obeyed Him - even though people thought I was mad! And because I did that, God said all my family were saved.

Abraham: Good morning, I'm Abraham. God also asked me to do some strange things. First, He told me to leave my country, to travel to an unknown place that would become my new home. I trusted God and did exactly what He told me to do. That all worked out OK. Then years later, He asked me to do something that nearly broke my heart. He asked me to offer up my son, Isaac, my only son, as a sacrifice. At first, I wondered how God was going to keep His promise He'd made to me (the one about giving me descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky) - if my son was dead! But then I figured that if God wanted to, He could raise the dead. So I obeyed Him even though my heart was breaking. Thankfully, God stopped me before Isaac was harmed so all was well. And of course as you know, I did become the father of many nations, a great nation with more descendants than I could have ever imagined!

Joseph: Hi, I'm Joseph. You know, the one with the coat of many colours! When I was younger, God told me through a dream that my family would bow before me when I was older. As the years went by, that seemed very unlikely. First, I was sold into slavery in Egypt, and then I was thrown into prison. During this time, I trusted and believed in God, that He would guide me through my troubles. And He did - in fact, God used all my experiences to prepare me to be in an important position in Egypt, so that I could help my family and others to survive the famine. If I hadn't trusted and believed in God, they all might have died! And by the way, that dream did come true!!

Rahab: Hi - I'm Rahab. I was not brought up knowing God but when the Israelite spies came on a reconnaissance mission to my city, Jericho, I knew the right thing to do was to hide them from the authorities. I believed that their God was the one true God and so I was not destroyed like the rest of the people in my city who refused to obey God. And did you know I had a very famous descendant? Yes, God gave me a very special place in the ancestral line of Jesus, the Saviour of the whole world!

Pap: Thank you all so much for telling us your stories. And of course there have been many other heroes of the faith, like Daniel, Deborah, Gideon, Samson, David, Samuel, the prophets and many ordinary people. It appears that the thing that they all have in common is that they had a heart that trusted God and obeyed Him. And that seems to be the only qualification that's needed to be a superhero of the faith. This is Pap Arattsi, over and out!

(Back to studio)

Paige: Thank you Pap. Panel, do either of you have anything to add?

Rick: Meeting all these heroes of the faith has been very encouraging, especially to realise that they were all just ordinary people who God used to do extraordinary things!

Jake: Do you think it was because they looked good or that they had great talents or abilities or were just popular?

Paige: Or maybe they were rich, or intelligent, or even said and did the right things all of the time?

Tim: No, we probably would think those are very important qualities to consider but thankfully God doesn't look at the things people look at.

Rick: No! He looks at the heart. In other words, He is interested in whether you love Him, want to serve Him, trust Him and want to obey Him.

Tim: Which means that if the greatest Bible heroes did nothing so amazing as to simply trusting and obeying God, then this is a heroic act that every one of us can do too, so that we can also be superheroes of the faith.

Jake: Thank you. We are going to take a short break now as we sing a song together. See you all in a few minutes.

Praise: Trust And Obey (When We Walk With The Lord)

Part 2: Being A Superhero

Paige: Welcome back to Part Two of this special edition of Prime Time Investigates. For those of you who have just joined us, today we are investigating superheroes of the Christian faith.

Jake: So far, we have found out that to be a superhero of the faith, you must have a heart that trusts God and a desire to obey Him.

Paige: We have just met some amazing Bible heroes who can testify how God had a plan for their lives and how He used them for a particular purpose.

Jake: Each one had a mission to complete which, of course, leads us to the big question: Is there an assignment for Jesus' followers? Pane, your thoughts on this, please.

Rick: Yes, of course there is. The Bible makes it clear that God has an incredible plan for each life that is committed to Him . . .

Reader 1: "For I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Tim: And, of course, Jesus Himself gave His followers very specific details of their assignment when He was here on the earth 2,000 years ago.

Paige: Thank you, Panel. We need to get more information on this. . . so, let's go to our Jobs and Employment Correspondent, Mike Raffone. Mike, can you hear me? What have you been able to find out?

(Mike and guests on location)

Mike: Hello, Paige, it's not been easy but I have managed to track down two of Jesus' disciples. As you know, they spent quite a lot of time with Him, listening to Him, His teachings, and learning from Him. I'm hoping they can tell us more, so let's hear what they have to say. Peter and John, thank you for taking the time to talk with me. Can you give me any information on the instructions Jesus gave about your assignment? Peter, we'll start with you.

Peter: Yes, we can. Firstly, He taught us how to live so that we could make a difference to those around us.

John: He also told us to show love and kindness to everybody, help our neighbour and forgive our enemies.

Peter: Some of those things were hard to do, but He never asked us to do anything that He didn't do Himself and He was always there, helping and guiding us.

John: But then, after about 3 ½ years with us, He said He was leaving us to go back to heaven.

Mike: How did that make you feel?

Peter: We were devastated. How would we manage to do what He'd asked without Him?

John: Thankfully, He promised us that we would not be alone. He would send a helper to live within

us, the Holy Spirit, who would give us the courage, strength, and ability to do everything He asked of us.

Peter: We needed help all right, because just before He went away, He told us that we had a really important job to do.

John: Some people today call this job "The Great Commission".

Mike: The great commission? That sounds important.

Peter: It is. It's the most important job ever. He told us to go out into the world and tell everyone the good news about how He came to save them.

Mike: But wasn't that just an assignment for you guys and the disciples back then?

John: Not at all! This is an assignment for ALL Christians for ALL time!

Mike: ALL Christians??

Peter: Yes! If you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that He died to rescue you from sin, and that He rose again, and if you want to follow His ways then you are a disciple too, so this is an assignment for you!

Mike: Well, Peter and John, thank you very much. We have learned a lot from you today. Paige and Jake, back to you in the studio. This is Mike Raffone, over and out.

(Back to studio)

Paige: Thank you, Mike. Could I just bring in our panel again? Panel, Tim, this assignment seems almost impossible for ordinary people like you and me to carry out.

Tim: It would be if we were doing it on our own, but God tells us that He'll be with us always. We don't have to do it alone, or in our own strength.

Paige: So our power doesn't come from ourselves?

Tim: No, God's Word says that when you believe and trust in Jesus as your Saviour, *He* will give you power - power to follow Him bravely and obey Him willingly, just like all the people of the faith that have gone before.

Reader 2: "Our great power is from God, not from ourselves." (2 Corinthians 4:7)

Paige: It's very comforting that God doesn't send you out on the most important mission of your life without backup.

Rick: Yes, it is. And as well as providing us with a power source, God also gives us, His children, super powers to help them serve Him.

Jake: Superpowers? I can think of some amazing superpowers, like invisibility, or super strength, or flight, but I don't think you have that sort of superpower in mind!

Rick: No, I don't. Here is a short video which might help.

(Enter Mac and Tess, a puppet dressed up like a superhero with mask and cape, her arm in a sling.)

Mac: Awww, Tess - what happened? And why are you dressed like that?

Tess: This is a superhero costume! I know that God gives Christians superpowers, so I decided to use mine to become...SUPER TESS!

Mac: Super cool! So, what's your superpower?

Tess: *(sadly)* That's how I hurt my arm. I tried to fly.

Mac: Um, how did you go about doing that now?

Tess: *(Pauses)* I, uh, climbed up onto my roof and jumped off.

Mac: *(gasp)* But don't you live in a two-story building?!

Tess: Yeah.

Mac: Oh, well, it's a good job you're made of cloth and felt.

Tess: Then, I tried running faster than a train and jumping over a tower.

Mac: Was that successful?

Tess: Nope. No luck. Not even invisibility worked.

Mac: Well, you know, those aren't exactly the kind of superpowers that God gives to His people. He gives gifts, talents and abilities that we can use to serve Him and others.

Tess: Oh, I understand now - like being able to explain the Bible to others, or tell them about Jesus, or encourage them, or pray, or be a good listener, or play an instrument, or make teas, or clean the church.

Mac: That's right! We can use our gifts, talents and abilities to help other people in our church and in our community, and to tell other people about Jesus so they can come to know Him as their Saviour. Now, have you figured out what your Christian superpower is?

Tess: Yes! I think my superpower is helping kids learn to follow Jesus!

Mac: That's cool, Tess! And remember, you don't have to do it on your own. The Holy Spirit is with you, to help you to use your superpower for His glory!

(Back to studio)

Rick: So you see, God equips us to serve Him and we just have to be willing to do absolutely anything He asks us to do, just like the Bible heroes.

Reader 3: "Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others." (1 Peter 4:10)

Tim: And remember that we don't have to depend on our own strength to complete our assignment - it's God's power working in ordinary people like you and me that makes them into great heroes.

Jake: Thank you, and that is very good news indeed. OK folks, We are going to take another short break now to sing a song together. See you all in a few minutes.

Praise: God's People

Part 3: Winning As A Superhero

Paige: Welcome back to Part 3 of Prime Time Investigates.

Jake: So far, the focus of our investigation has been on the superheroes themselves.

Paige: Now it's time to turn our attention to . . . the supervillain!

Jake: As you all know, supervillains are the archenemies of superheroes.

Paige: Is there an enemy that followers of Jesus have to battle with? Panel, can you give us any information on this? Tim.

Tim: Well, our archenemy is Satan, the devil. He hates God and is always fighting Him and trying to ruin things, just like the bad guys in movies. He also attacks us, God's children.

Rick: He is cunning and sly.....

Tim: dangerous.....

Rick: and constantly prowling around trying to destroy our friendship with Jesus by tempting us to betray Him, to sin, sowing doubts and even discouraging us in our mission.

Jake: Ooooo, he sounds formidable!

Tim: He is. But... the great news is that He is NOT equal to God.

Jake: He's not? Oh, that IS a relief. But how do you know?

Tim: Because he has already been defeated by Jesus' death & resurrection. Jesus is wa-ay greater, and because He lives within us, as believers through His Holy Spirit, we too are more than conquerors.

Reader 4: "God's Spirit is in you and is more powerful than the one who is in the world." (1 John 4:4)

Rick: But even though Satan is beaten, he never gives up attacking us. So God has given us something very special to wear to protect ourselves from the devil.

Paige: Do you mean like a superhero costume?

Rick: Sort of! It's more like PPE than a superhero costume. It is actually described in the Bible as the armour of God and it is . . .

Jake: Rick, Rick, I'm going to stop you there. We're going to go over to our fashion reporter, Jay Freeway.

(Jay and Paul on location)

Jay: Hi there, I'm Jay. I'm going to bring you the latest in Christian fashion wear. And here is Paul to model for us the Full Armour of God. Isn't that magnificent, folks? As you can see, his loins are completely covered in truth - the truth about Jesus and what He has done for us. The Breastplate of Righteousness shines with purity – not our own, but that of Jesus. And I see that accessories play a key role in the Christian fashion. The footwear is from the Preparation of the Gospel of peace, which enables us to be always be ready to complete our assignment. Paul, please, just a word about your shield. Can you tell us what benefits you obtain when carrying this particular piece of armour?

Paul: Well, Jay, I must tell you I just would not be the same person without my Shield of Faith. You see, it completely extinguishes all those nasty flaming arrows the Devil tries to throw at me.

Jay: Wow, that's great! Do tell us what else you have there.

Paul: Well, Jay, I'm most proud of this headgear I wear. See, it was a gift from my Saviour, Jesus Christ. This, I'm proud to say, is my Helmet of Salvation.

Jay: Amazing! It must have cost a pretty penny.

Paul: Actually, no. It didn't cost me anything at all - but Jesus paid for it with His life.
Jay: What's this you carry in your right hand?
Paul: This? This is my Sword of the Spirit.
Jay: Oh, I must ask who produces this fine art and how do I get one?
Paul: Well, you see, the Sword of the Spirit comes from the word of God. The best way to have it is through memorization of the Scriptures God has given us. And like any weapon, it becomes sharper and more efficient as I use it.
Jay: Well, Paul, I know you're in a hurry to get back, but before you go, tell us where you can wear your armour, and if you needed to, which pieces you could do without.
Paul: Oh, please don't let *anyone* make that mistake. When you put on the Armour of God, wear it ALL! Hey, I wouldn't be without a single piece of armour. As far as where you can wear it, you can wear it anywhere and everywhere. It's a perfect fit and made to the exact specifications. It's very comfortable and should be worn at all times.
Jay: Thank you, Paul. Thank you! One note I might add from the fashion designer - this can be fitted to anyone without concern for age, race, gender or size. And one last thing for those of you who like getting a bargain – it's absolutely free!

(Back to studio)

Jake: Thank you, Jay. Rick, we've just heard Paul saying that he wouldn't be without a single piece. What's your advice for followers of Jesus - do you think it's necessary to wear it all?
Rick: Absolutely. And put it on every single time, every single day to get maximum protection!
Reader 5: "Be strong in the LORD and in his mighty power. Put on the full armour of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." (Ephesians 6:10-11)
Jake: That's GREAT advice and I can see why it's important to follow it. Now, I'm sure that some of the viewers today would like to know about being a superhero. So, before we finish up, Tim, can you tell us where we can go to get more information?
Tim: Well, everything that Jesus wants us to know about being a hero of the faith is written in the Bible. We need to study it so that we can learn more about Him and access the power to do God's work and serve others.
Rick: And for us to be real heroes, we need to meet with Jesus on a regular basis to connect with the source of our power, to report back to Him on the current status of our assignment, to get new instructions, encouragement and advice.
Tim: We can do this in our secret lair, a special place where we can spend time talking to Him in prayer and learning from Him as we read the Bible.
Reader 6: Jesus said to His disciples, "Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." (Mark 6:31)
Reader 7: "Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4)
Reader 8: "Pray at all times." (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
Paige: Well, folks, we have come to the end of this investigation and I really hope that it has given you much food for thought. Panel, can we have a final comment from each of you before we go? Tim?
Tim: Every one of us can become a hero of the faith, just like those great heroes of old that we met earlier. All we have to do is trust and obey God, and depend on His power to complete our assignment.
Paige: And Rick?
Rick: Let us keep our eyes fixed on Jesus as we run the race set before us - so that one day God

will say to us “well done, good and faithful servant” and we too may be initiated into His great hall of fame.

Paige: Thank you both very much for all your input into today’s discussion. It has been most enlightening.

Jake: And finally, we are going to end our programme today with a poem about the greatest superhero of all – and, of course, that is Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

Paige: It just remains for us to say a huge thank you to all our guests, reporters and, of course, our panel for being with us this morning. This is Paige Turner . . .

Jake: And this is Jake Goodreader. Thank you for watching and goodbye, till next time!

He had no servants, yet they called Him Master.
He had no degree, yet they called Him Teacher.
He had no medicines, yet they called Him Healer.
He had no army, yet Kings feared Him.
He won no military battles, yet He conquered the world.
He did not live in a castle, yet they called Him Lord.
He had no earthly throne yet they called Him King.
He committed no crime, yet they crucified Him.
He had no need to do so, yet He forgave them as they mocked.
He was buried in a tomb, yet He lives today!
His name is Jesus Christ, and He is the Saviour of the world!

Prayers for Others:

Loving heavenly Father, we praise You because of the wonderful things You have done. Though sometimes we feel that things on this earth are insurmountable problems, You have proven time and again that You reign over all, even this deadly disease. We are in grateful adoration of the God who has allowed governments to keep the nations under control, and has given this nation, in particular, the wonderful news that the numbers of deaths and cases related to this sickness are going down. Thank you for the gift of this wonderful world that has flourished, though we, humanity, have floundered. We are increasingly sorry for not realising the sheer beauty of this planet we call home until now. We are grateful that birdsong can still be heard now over the low rumble of the few cars that are on the streets. Words could not describe the beauty that greets us each day as we see the rose buds blossom into fragrant flowers. We now see how intricate and detailed each example of nature is, and it fills us with adoration for the God who created them.

We recognize that we ourselves are sinful people and we humbly ask for Your forgiveness. Perhaps this week we haven’t spent as much time with You as we should have, or perhaps we were too busy to make time for prayer. We wish to bring to You all these things, and we ask for forgiveness, though we don’t deserve it. We know, however, that because of what Jesus has done for us, when we say sorry from our hearts, You always forgive us.

We finally want to come to You with our worries and concerns, and we ask that You would help us today. We pray for the people in our church community who are working on the frontlines: for nurses Anne, Avegel, and Jenny, for doctors Baan and Ayman, for physio Jonathan, and for Sibongile and Antoine working in nursing homes. Please give them wisdom and stamina for their work, and protect them from infection. For William Brereton, who is sick in hospital. For Ray’s cousin, David, who’s recovering from an accident. For the people from our church community and beyond who are missing their loved ones during the lockdown. For the people watching this service online, that they

may know how much You love them and how much You care about whatever they are going through. We pray all these things in the precious name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, amen.

Isn't it amazing to realise that though this world is filled with evil and enemies, seen and unseen, we have a Saviour who has defeated them all, even death. How would it change the way we live, knowing that in Christ we have been chosen and created, and by His Spirit we are equipped, to do good works, to serve Him and others, to stand firm in Him and with Him as soldiers of light in a world of darkness? This new life of faith, trusting and obeying God as we are empowered by His Holy Spirit, not only changes us as individuals. It transforms our relationships, our church, our society and our world. I hope that you will continue to join us over the coming months as Paul teaches us how to live that new life in his letter to the Ephesians (complete with the fashion tips we saw earlier). His first instruction to us in Chapter 1 was to praise the Lord, so just as we began our service in praise, we close with praise, singing "Hosanna!" to our wonderful Saviour, the King of Kings.

Closing Praise: IPH 360 What A Wonderful Saviour Is Jesus

A Few Words Of Appreciation:

What a wonderful Saviour indeed. Before we finish, I'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to today's service: to the actors, both young and old, to the puppeteers, the readers, to those who prayed, and to those who provided wonderful drawings and artwork; to Leopoldo, for leading our praise all the way from Portugal; to Katie, not only for your help with today's service, but for also continuing with the superheroes theme and Bible verses during the lockdown. And I know that young and old alike have been blessed by your creative and inspiring videos. Finally, a huge thank you to the production team: to Mark, for editing the play, and to Marcos, for putting everything together for the final video. I now realise the work that Marcos puts in every week in preparing our service for us as I've watched Mark get to grips with the editing program, and I can tell you it's a very time-consuming process indeed. We will end our service today with a lovely Irish blessing sung for us by Jane and Charlene. Thank you girls, and may God bless us all this week.

Just before Jane and Charlene sing the benediction, on behalf of the church family, I want to say a huge thank you to Carole for her service to God in the leadership of Sunday Special and K2. The workload is large, her desire to be creative and interesting in communicating the truth is impressive, and her obvious hope that the children would learn about Jesus and come to faith and be strengthened in that faith is heartwarming. Carole, thank you so very much. To the teachers, assistants, helpers, and parents, we also say thank you. Everyone plays their part, and it takes a collective team effort to successfully run our children's work. We give thanks to God for you all, and for this good work.

Benediction:

May the road rise to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, and rains fall soft upon your fields. And until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand. Amen.