

Sunday, August 14, 2022
The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Matt Duerr

“Marching Orders”

Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, Amen. It's been said that nothing gets a person's attention more than death or war. Because when death is imminent, we are faced with mortality, and we realize we are literally going to lose our life. And war because when facing war, we realize that we might literally be losing our life or maybe worse, losing our way of life. Either way, death or war leaves people feeling vulnerable, helpless, small, and oftentimes hopeless.

That is exactly how Winston Churchill and Franklin Delano Roosevelt felt in 1941 as they met on the British battleship the Prince of Wales to discuss Nazi Germany and World War Two. They realized they were facing both war and death and it was a sobering meeting. When it was done Churchill and Roosevelt came up out of the meeting room; Churchill immediately requested that the Royal Navy play “Onward Christian Soldiers.” Later, he addressed both the people of England and Europe as well as the people of the United States through the BBC. He explained why they sang Onward Christian Soldiers. Why, I'll quote him, “here was our only hope.”

Since that time the hymn began to be sung in churches on both sides of the “pond,” or the Atlantic as we would say. It was sung in the battlefields of World War Two. It was sung in the POW camps of World War Two, and it is still sung at many patriotic events today. And yet uniquely, it was not intended that way. It was written as a children's song. In fact, it was written specifically for children by an Anglican priest whose name was Sabine Bearingold. He was a very successful priest. He was a sharp cookie, he graduated from Cambridge University, he served all over Europe and he was one of those priests that people were clamoring for why because he was well known for his being available at a moment's notice to anyone in the community. He was sent in the later years of his ministry to Horbury, England. Priests had a title

for Horbury, England. They called it the very end of the earth. Why? Because it was one of, if not the bleakest Parrish a person could serve in. It was a coral mining community. Where there was horrendous poverty, and I might add horrendous childhood for any children who lived there. Children more often penniless and fatherless as a result of tragedies in those coal mines. There was always a cloud of cold dust over this little community set between the hills that were being mined for coal. It blocked the sun, it dirtied everything including their lungs. With such poverty there was no sanctuary, no church building for them to gather in. They simply gathered in the room above the post office. When priests received their placement there, they resented it, they saw this punishment and they quickly maneuvered seeking a new call.

But not Sabine Baringold. Sabine saw it as a wonderful opportunity. And opportunity to reach out and to bring hope to the hopeless and true faith to the faithless. He really had a sense of what Jesus spoke of in Matthew chapter 25, “whatever you have done to the least of these my brethren, you have done unto me. And he saw them as the least, but he believed that they were, and I quote him, “the greatest and most wonderful mission on earth.”

He immediately focused his efforts on the children, and he began to share with them stories of the other places throughout Europe where he had served in, the and the beauty of these places. And at the same time, he would encourage them to work hard and to work excellently in everything they did. Whether it was schoolwork or chores at home or a job that they had the necessity to work at. Work hard, work excellent, succeed. Make something of yourself so that you can go and see these places so that you can escape the mines and go and see the bright sunshine that is that is found elsewhere.

He endeared himself to the young people and to the old. How, he loved them like Jesus loved them sacrificially. He lived up to his reputation of being there at a moment's notice for anyone. It was in 1864 that Horbury prepared for Whit Monday. Whit Monday is the day after Pentecost. It's the Monday after Pentecost. It's also known as the Monday of the Holy Spirit. And their community Horbury, along with

others who were all in that area; they would all gather together, of all these communities of Yorkshire, in one place. Now Horbury was never picked as the place.

When all of the children from the different communities would come together, and they would come to this one place, in like a giant parade procession coming from all different directions. And this was a big deal. They were celebrating the gift of the Holy Spirit. And so, banners would be made, and costumes would be made, and it was quite a festival. But Horbury couldn't afford any of that stuff, their children every year would just walk together in silent procession. On Pentecost Sunday after the church service, he saw some of the children playing, and they were playing war. And that was his inspiration, I will write them a song.

we have our own song we might not have costumes we might not have banners, but we will have a song, and so he wrote **Onward Christian Soldiers** that night. As he said, and I'll quote him, "it is full of faulty rhymes," and explains why. Again, I quote, "it was written with great haste." He put it to Hayden's Symphony in "D" which was a marching tune, and they used it. He meant for it to be used just that one time. He didn't copyright it or anything. But when he taught the children the verses, and the melody with it, they loved it! They had something unique and so as they came marching in singing the song joyfully in dirty crummy clothes with no banners. Everybody took notice and they joined in too; learning that song and singing it with them; and continuing to sing it in the weeks, the months, the years ahead. Sabine said and I quote again, "I don't even remember how it got printed!"

But we do know how it got printed. Seven years later, it was 1871 a gentleman by the name of Arthur S. Sullivan heard it, he loved it, the is, the message, but he thought Haydn's Symphony in D, was too much like a funeral dirge. This song needed something peppy, so he wrote a new tune for it, he put it in his book which was titled, **The Hymnal** and within 10 years it was used around the world. It became the marching anthem of the Salvation Army, which it is to this day. It became a song of sending for those who were ordained into the foreign mission field, as it is still done today. It was very familiar to Winston Churchill and

Franklin Delano Roosevelt who faced both death and war. They were looking at losing many lives also potentially the loss of a way of life. They saw World War Two as more than just a battle, it was a spiritual battle.

Onward Christian Soldiers marching as to war. They were lined up, but they were not marching to war; no, they don't have swords. They are marching with the cross of Jesus. Why, because Christ is the royal Master. Royal, He's the King of kings, the Lord of lords. And yet, He leads them. He comes down, He is with them. He is personal, He leads. And as a result, like a mighty army moves the Church of God as that Church follows their royal Master.

Brothers, when Sabine Baringold, uses that term, it brings everybody into fellowship. Brothers we are traveling where the Saints of God have trod. Think of what that says to you and me. Think of what that said to those children of Horbury. You're walking in the footsteps of Saint Peter, you're walking in the footsteps of Saint Andrew, the footsteps of Saint John. We, the Saints of today, we are not divided. All one body are we. One in hope and again, for the Christian, hope is a guaranteed expectation. We know we are going to heaven. We know we are saved! One in the hope, one in doctrine. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever. The Savior, The Rock on which the church is built. And one in charity, seeing the needs of those around us. And then comes the call, join us, join our happy throng! Those kids marching in, looking like destitute children, happy and singing; won the hearts of everybody! Because they were singing the truth.

I have to ask, are we? Are we a happy throng? Are we happy to be here because we're gathered together as the body of Christ singing praises to our God? This is what the song, this is what those children sang; blend with ours your voices in the triumph song! Christ rose, defeated sin, death and the devil on Easter morning, a Sunday which is why we come to church on Sunday. trust center child song who lives he raised his return blend with ours your voices in the triumph song. Glory, laud, and honor; Glory to Christ our King!

This is what is sung through endless, dare I say, eternal ages. Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are the children of Horbury. We are treading familiar ground. We need to not be divided, but of one hope, one doctrine, one charity. Blending our voices together in a happy throng, Christ is victorious! Glory to Him. And we are living in our own Horbury. I'm not even going to talk about it. We all know it.

But will we, like Sabine Baringold embrace it? Will we look for the child, the old person to love? Will we make ourselves available to anyone in need and will we endear ourselves to each other and to them? Or are we going to be like the priests before Sabine Baringold, who couldn't see the mission field that God called them to and so they asked to leave?

Brothers and sisters in Christ in Lodi, in Valley Springs, in Jackson and wherever you may be if you are joining us in worship this morning or hearing this sermon online, I think we have our marching orders and I think it's time to step to it. In our Savior's Name, Amen.