

# Wales' Recovery Sunday Service

27 October 2024

Written by **Rhys Powys**

**VOICE 1**

Friends. The Church wants me to announce that the Recovery Service will not be held today as expected. Following discussions that took place, following the processes of developing the service, the decision was made that the service will not take place this year. In addition, the service will not be shared with chapels and churches across Wales. As a result of this decision, the Church will review the processes and procedures of commissioning their services as a result of this decision. The next service will be held here in a weeks' time. Thank you very much.

(Silence)

**VOICE 2**

And that's it? Is it?

**VOICE 1**

Ummmm... yep. Pretty much.

**VOICE 2**

Nothing else? No explanation? No further information?

**VOICE 1**

No. Well, not at the moment. I'm sure that more details will come to light later after "reviewing the processes and procedures" etcetera. After the dust settles, as it were.

**VOICE 2**

I see. And how do you feel about that?

**VOICE 1**

Relief, really. You see, I've been worried... worried, who am I to put together a service on the theme of "recovery"? I've never done it before. What right do I have to say anything about "addiction" or "recovery"? What right does anyone have to put themselves in someone else's shoes? To make statements about something they have not directly experienced.

**VOICE 2**

I see. (Pause)

**VOICE 1**

It's an interesting question, you see. The right of authors, writers, playwrights

and creative people to create characters and put words in their mouths. Speaking on behalf of other people. Putting themselves in imagined situations; situations they may not have personal experience of.

**VOICE 2**

Right.

**VOICE 1**

Mind you, writers have been doing this for generations. Telling their own stories and then using their creativity and imagination to tell stories about other people... but maybe the times are changing. People now want to speak for themselves and are less willing to accept other people speaking for them. Putting words in their mouths, so to speak. For better, or for worse, that's how it is at the moment.

**VOICE 2**

Ok. What shall we do then? Go home?

**VOICE 1**

Umm... No. Listen to this...

**“UNDER THE BRIDGE” - RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS - (4'28”)**

**VOICE 1**

“Sometimes I feel like I don't have a partner  
Sometimes I feel that my only friend  
Is the city I live in, the city of angels  
Lonely as I am, together we cry.

I drive on her streets 'cause she's my companion  
I walk through her hills 'cause she knows who I am  
She sees my good deeds and she kisses me windy  
I never worry, now that is a lie.

I don't ever want to feel like I did that day  
Take me to the place I love, take me all the way  
It's hard to believe that there's nobody out there  
It's hard to believe that I'm all alone  
At least I have her love, the city she loves me  
Lonely as I am, together we cry.

I don't ever want to feel like I did that day  
Take me to the place I love, take me all the way.

Under the bridge downtown  
Is where I drew some blood  
Under the bridge downtown  
I could not get enough  
Under the bridge downtown  
Forgot about my love  
Under the bridge downtown  
I gave my life away.

### **Voice 1**

The reading this morning comes from “Scar Tissue”, Anthony Kiedis’s autobiography. He’s the singer with the ‘Red Hot Chili Peppers’. Here he describes his early experience in a rehab centre in California...

“From time to time, Bob Timmons would send different random sober people to visit me. I didn’t know any of them, but I’d sit down to talk to them, and therein lay the magic of recovery. No one will ever really understand your predicament better than another addict. This stranger came and talked to me, and the next thing I knew, the process of recovery was happening, whether I liked it or not...

There wasn’t any single moment of bedazzling revelation, it was more of an educational process. The more I learned about the nature of addiction, the more I was willing to look at my own behavior and history. And the more I was able to help the people I was in there with the more it all made sense.... I realized that this was not the jail I wanted to live my life in.”

### **Voice 2**

Interesting. And that’s your experience of recovery? Reading rock-stars’ biographies?

### **Voice 1**

Well, as far as I can see, Anthony Kiedis is writing honestly, from his own personal experience, and he has had far more experience in this field than me. Personal experience of dealing with addiction, dealing with temptation. He describes it as a constant lifelong battle with a big, powerful gorilla...

### **Voice 3**

#### **READING**

MATTHEW 4: 1-14

#### **HYMN**

### **Voice 2**

Ha ha! A reading from the Gospel and a traditional hymn. That's rather "old school"!

### **Voice 1**

Well, you've got to keep the people happy.

### **Voice 2**

Of course. That's important. What's next? A prayer?

### **Voice 1**

Well, that's more of a problem for me. Once again, I find myself asking, "who am I to guide people's thinking?" Prayer is such a personal act; I don't feel worthy or able or comfortable recommending how people should communicate through prayer.

### **Voice 2**

Back to the theme of "personal experience"?

### **Voice 1**

Yes. I would suggest sitting in silence for a minute or two, for everyone to close their eyes and communicate with their God in their own way... but some people wouldn't be comfortable with that, so I did what anyone in a dilemma would do these days... ask for help...

"In this moment of vulnerability, I seek Your strength and guidance. I ask for Your healing presence to envelop me, restoring my spirit and renewing my hope. Grant me the courage to face each day with grace and resilience.

Help me to let go of the burdens I carry, and to embrace the journey of recovery with an open heart. Surround me with support, love, and understanding, and guide me to the resources I need for healing...."

### **Voice 2 (interrupting)**

Hang on! Where do those words come from?

**Voice 1**

ChatGPT. I asked for a “recovery prayer” and within a few seconds... bang!  
There it was!

**Voice 2**

A.I? So not one living soul has actually put any thought into the meaning of these words.

**Voice 1**

Ym... no. I guess not. Therefore, is the prayer itself meaningless?

**Voice 2**

Well, you’re the one who is banging on about the importance of “personal experience”.

**Voice 1**

You’re right. Fair enough. So, here’s another attempt...

**Voice 3**

Global Lord, and God of all goodness,  
we kneel before you, asking for your guidance,  
as we celebrate yet another Recovery Sunday, this year.  
You are the fount of love and mercy,  
and we sense the tragedies of the world anew.

We pray for all the governments of the world this Sunday,  
as we recall that politics played its part  
between the Jewish officials and Pilat’s need  
to uphold the Roman Empire’s task of maintaining peace  
with an iron fist.

We witness specifically to the horrific wars in Ukraine and the Middle East,  
but know that there are citizens in many countries,  
who tremble in fear, knowing that the tension of war exists within their nations.  
God of shalom, give peace anew.

We remember Jesus, as one who heard the plea of the needy in the world,  
the lonely and the frail, the lame and the homeless, the sick and the pitiful.  
Within their company today,  
we pray for those who are captive to substances,  
and to destructive practices.  
May they reach unto you and experience the power of your love,

and hope of the new life in Jesus.

We pray for the peoples of the world,  
that don't know of the Easter miracle -

- the dawn of the Jesus' resurrection
- the mercy of his touch
- the new life of his blessing

Convincing Spirit, hear our prayer for the mission of the Church.

Lord, be merciful unto us as individuals -  
help us to deepen our faith and the earnestness of our testament to you.  
Amen.

### **Voice 2**

What's next? The gospel according to Dave Grohl?

### **Voice 1**

No. I've been listening a lot recently to "Wild God", the new album from "Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds". Nick Cave is originally from Australia and was addicted to various drugs for over two decades. But he has survived, has recovered, and despite several personal tragedies he is still writing deep, thoughtful songs based on his personal experiences. And these songs are full of hope, full of "joy".

### **Voice 2**

Joy?

### **Voice 1**

Yes. "Joy" as opposed to "happiness". Anyway, as well as composing and performing music Nick Cave is responsible for a website called "The Red Hand Files" where he answers questions directly from his followers; questions about loss, temptation and addiction, based on his own experiences. He has received over a hundred thousand questions so far and he chooses some to answer with honesty and integrity - rare values on social media these days, as far as I can see.

For example, listen to this...

"A well-known couplet from Leonard Cohen's song, Anthem, goes, 'There is a crack, a crack in everything/ That's how the light gets in.' These words had always sounded like a platitude and a little corny to me, but a long, dark journey made me better understand their radical and unsettling nature - that God is often most acutely found in His absence.

This realization shook me to the core, that the meaning of life – its joy, boundless beauty and love – emerges out of our most devastating losses. I learned that without the savagery of life, love has no true domain, and the relational quality of joy and beauty has no natural way to express itself. I came to understand that although the world’s energizing principle is love, joy ultimately declares itself most intensely through our heartbreaks.

The idea that ‘God is love’ is a hard-earned truth, and it can be discomfoting to think that His presence is at its most resonant in life’s darkest and cruelest moments.”

### **Voice 2**

These are Nick Cave’s words.

### **Voice 1**

Yes. And that’s how I want to bring this service to a close; by listening to “Joy” by Nick Cave.

(“Joy” - Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds”, from the album “Wild God” plays - (6’ 14”)

(Over the opening of the track we hear...)

### **Voice 1**

In a recent interview with the “Big Issue” Nick Cave says...

“We’ve all had too much sorrow,  
Now is the time for joy”

“No one’s able to be joyful all the time. Joy is a sort of euphoric spasm, like a frog jumping into the air. Happiness is a different emotion altogether. Joy is dependent on our suffering. Otherwise, we’re not jumping from anything.”

(5 minutes into the track we hear...)

### **Voice 2**

Do you think that this service has accomplished anything at all? Anything other than filling a gap in the church diary?

### **Voice 1**

I don’t know. I really don’t know. And I doubt that we’ll get any reaction from anyone.



I just hope that someone, somewhere has heard something that has interested them, touched them perhaps, struck a chord with them - that one person has had some benefit from listening...

Otherwise, I guess we might as well have just gone home...

(The song finishes, and the service draws to a close.)

If you need help, phone **07796 464 045** or email  
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