

Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch Parish Church

Sunday 21st June 2020

To be able to access the links, go to the bottom of this page and left click on the date. This will download the pdf in a new window, then simply click on the links as indicated.

Welcome

Today is the third Sunday after Pentecost. May we hear God's word and be filled with his Holy Spirit.

Call to Worship: Psalm 86:11-13 (GNT)

Teach me, Lord, what you want me to do,
and I will obey you faithfully;
teach me to serve you with complete devotion.
I will praise you with all my heart, O Lord my God;
I will proclaim your greatness forever.
How great is your constant love for me!
You have saved me from the grave itself.

Song: [Come now is the time to Worship](#) *Click on the link*

Prayer of Praise, Confession, Assurance of Forgiveness and Lord's Prayer



Living and eternal God we praise your Holy name. You only are the creator of all things. You only are the source of love. You only are the Lord. We praise your Holy name.

Forgive us Lord when we doubt you, when we forget your Word, when we do not obey, or show in our thoughts, words, and actions that you are Lord over our lives. Forgive us Lord when we stir up storms around us turning upside down other lives, and then pretend that we are the victims.

When we consider that the grass is greener on the other side, bring us home to your promised land. When we neglect the needs of others, place your love and compassion in our hearts and forgive us. When we are tempted to sing songs from other hymn-sheets, place your song of hope on our lips and forgiveness us. When we seek to help others only when it is of benefit to ourselves, help us to love sacrificially and forgive us.

Praise and glory be to you Holy God for your promise that you will forgive our sin and no longer remember our wrongdoing.

Loving Father we thank you for sending Jesus. We thank you that he showed us your loving nature, loving us sacrificially, dying to set us right with you. We thank you that he rose in glory from death opening the gates of heaven that all may go in. We thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit who lives within us, our constant companion on the journey of life.

We thank you for all the blessings of this life. We thank you for friends and family and all who care for us. We thank you for food, clothing, shelter, medical care and all that enables us to enjoy life on earth. We thank you for your Word and to know, that to you, each person is uniquely special and treasured. We thank you for eternal life through faith in your Son our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We thank you for your unbounded love and care for us, now and for ever.

Praise and glory, honour and power be to you our eternal King.

In the power of the Spirit and in Jesus' name we pray...

Our Father, in heaven, holy is your name. Your Kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread and forgive us our sin as we forgive those who sin against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For yours is the Kingdom the power and the glory for ever. Amen

A Prayer for this time of Coronavirus

Loving God, we ask your blessing and comfort on all families who have suffered bereavement during this time of Coronavirus. Comfort too, all who are anxious for their own health and that of loved ones.

Make your presence felt to all who feel isolated, for whom social distancing has left them feeling lonely, and those whose faith has been challenged by doubt.

Grant strength to parents struggling with demanding children and having to develop teaching skills as they home school. We pray too for parents of children with a special need and for whom support has been withdrawn. Our hearts go out to the single parent living in a flat in the city. We ask your protection on children for whom being at home means being abused.

We place at your feet the needs of people unemployed, business owners, and all whose livelihoods are threatened.

We continue to ask your guidance and wisdom for decision makers at national and local level and for all seeking vaccines or medicines. Despite the frustrating precautions we need to take, help us all to play our part in keeping one another safe and well.

In the name of Jesus the healer we pray. Amen.



Bible Passages

Romans 6:1-11

What should we say? Should we keep on sinning, so that God's wonderful kindness will show up even better? ² No, we should not! If we are dead to sin, how can we go on sinning? ³ Don't you know that all who share in Christ Jesus by being baptised also share in his death? ⁴ When we were baptised, we died and were buried with Christ. We were baptised, so that we would live a new life, as Christ was raised to life by the glory of God the Father.

⁵ If we shared in Jesus' death by being baptised, we will be raised to life with him. ⁶ We know that the persons we used to be were nailed to the cross with Jesus. This was done, so that our sinful bodies would no longer be the slaves of sin. ⁷ We know that sin doesn't have power over dead people.

⁸ As surely as we died with Christ, we believe we will also live with him. ⁹ We know that death no longer has any power over Christ. He died and was raised to life, never again to die. ¹⁰ When Christ died, he died for sin once and for all. But now he is alive, and he lives only for God. ¹¹ In the same way, you must think of yourselves as dead to the power of sin. But Christ Jesus has given life to you, and you live for God.

Matthew 10: 24-39

²⁴ “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house **Beelzebul**, how much more will they malign those of his household.

²⁶ “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in **Gehenna**. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many **sparrows**. ³² So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, ³³ but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven.

³⁴ “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. ³⁶ And a person's enemies will be those of his own household. ³⁷ Whoever loves **father or mother** more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸ And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹ Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Beelzebul

Beelzebul means “master of the house”. It refers to Satan. Here the accusation is that Jesus, the real “master of all”, was really the devil. Jesus’ disciples should similarly expect to be falsely accused and denigrated.

Gehenna

Gehenna was a valley on the south-western edge of Jerusalem. It became a metaphor for the place of punishment having been a place where children were burned as sacrifices to the Ammonite god Moloch. It was made a garbage centre to discourage the reintroduction of such sacrifices. In rabbinic literature, Gehenna is a destination of the wicked, those who have committed adultery, idolatry, pride, mockery, hypocrisy, anger, etc.

Sparrows

Sparrows were regarded as small, almost worthless creatures. The penny was one of the least valuable Roman coins.

Father or mother

These sentences about family are a quote from Micah 7:6. It’s a prediction of the divisions that are caused when God does something new, because three are always those who are uncomfortable with it.

A New Normal

During this time of lockdown, a number of people have been reflecting what the world might, or perhaps should, look like once we are able to return to a 'new normal'. Those questions have been highlighted by the killing of George Floyd and the questions that has raised about how we live together with respect and dignity for one another.

What is it that our Christian faith can bring to that conversation? What is characteristic of the Christian life? What difference does being a disciple of Jesus make to our lives and those with whom we come into contact? Most importantly, what exactly are we offering people when we invite them into a relationship with Jesus Christ?

These are really important questions as we ease the lockdown. They are also crucial questions as we begin to pick up the threads of the tapestry, we began to weave last year about how we can meet the challenges the Church in Scotland faces over the coming years. We have already begun to think about working collaboratively across parish boundaries recognising that there will be fewer ordained ministers. However, a new Presbytery Plan (which now will not be available until 2021) needs to be set alongside how we answer these questions and a how we can be fruitful in mission and effective in ministry. So, in what ways might a new normal look like for the Church?

To begin to address these questions, and particularly to engage in mission effectively we need to understand what difference being a disciple of Jesus makes. If not, we will be a church that only offers friendship and good social events. These sustain us as Christians and can be the start of something mission shaped. However, the Christian life is more than that. The message we offer the wider community of our parishes must be deeper than that too. Surely, a 'new normal' needs to have God at the centre.

Paul is attempting to answer some of these questions in his letter to the Romans. In today's passage Paul speaks of a new normal, a new life with Christ, marked by baptism.

Baptism isn't simply a nice thing we do to give our babies a name. Baptism was, and is, the sign that a person has given their life to God. Christian parents want this for their children too. We read in the New Testament how whole households were baptised, which would have included children and infants. The Church developed Church Membership enabling people baptised as infants, when coming to faith themselves, to publicly confirm their love for Jesus confessing him as their Lord and Saviour.

In baptism we symbolically recognise the transformation that has taken place within us; that we have died to our old ways and been born again to a new life in Christ. Then, sin no longer has power over us. Of course, we continue to sin and get things wrong - but the Good News is that this no longer determines our eternal destiny. The power of God in our lives is greater than the power of sin. We have died to sin and are now living to God. That means we have nothing at all to fear.

The most repeated command in the Bible is not that we should love or pray but, "do not be afraid". This command not to be fearful anxious or worried appears over 100 times.

We need to be careful about the word 'fear' in the Bible. Often, we read "fear the Lord" or something similar when the word 'fear' actually means respect, honour, revere, or worship. However, when Jesus says, "do not be afraid", as he does in the passage we read from Matthew, he means don't be anxious, worried, concerned or frightened." Indeed, he says this three times (verses 26, 28 & 31)!

However, there seems quite a bit to be afraid of since Jesus is clear that his true followers can expect some rough treatment. Indeed, Jesus once warned the disciples, "If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first." (John 15:18). Even today that is true. There have been several pieces of research over the past few years each identifying Christians as the most persecuted religious group, globally. In addition, Jesus says that our innermost thoughts will one day be brought out into the open, so go public with them now. That sounds frightening, that our private thoughts and words will one day be revealed.

We might expect Jesus to say, "but don't worry because God will look after you". We'll come to that. More importantly, however, Jesus is keen that we should understand that it is our loyalty to him and faith in him that will be seen for what it is. When our innermost thoughts are made public we will be seen as true disciples of Jesus. We will be seen as people who know him intimately as our Lord and Saviour. It doesn't matter what names we are called or how we are treated by others justice will prevail. Indeed, we should be prepared and willing to speak of our faith openly, not keep it secret. We shouldn't be afraid of anyone, even people who can kill us.

However, we do need to fear those things which eat away at our faith in Jesus. We are most at risk when we are tempted away from God and seek vengeance and retribution when we are wronged; when we take the violence, oppression and intimidation levelled at us and turn it on others. Eugene Peterson interprets Jesus words in verse 28 like this; "Don't be bluffed into silence by the threats of bullies. There's nothing they can do to your soul, your core being."

When we resort to an eye for an eye and tooth for tooth, rather than love, that's the way to Gehenna (verse 28). That's the road to the rubbish dump, smouldering with continual fire.

Jesus' concluding remarks about family underline the ease by which we can slip into the ways of the world; our attitudes, values and actions diverted away from those consistent with our baptism and a life with God.

Nevertheless, Jesus does give us reassurance that God will be with us. He is the one we can trust with our, bodies, minds, lives and souls. God is the one we really do *not* need to be afraid of. If God takes note of every sparrow and even every single hair on our heads then nothing is too bothersome, too small or insignificant for him to care about.

You (and I) are worth more than a halfpenny sparrow. God cares about every single aspect of our lives. He certainly knows the dangers and temptations we face and he is there to uphold us and, when we do begin down the road to Gehenna, he's prepared to run after us and bring us back.

Our new life with Christ means we are “dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Romans 6:11). Equipped and guided by the Holy Spirit, together with one another and with Jesus, we pursue the mission that God has for us.

The more we understand we are dead to sin and alive to God, the more we will be transformed, and a greater transformation will take place within our communities and across the world. Consequently, any ‘new normal’ will look a little more like God’s Kingdom and the world will become a little more like God created it to be.

So, here’s two more crucial questions.

How can we be more alive to God?

Together as a church, how can we best reflect that new life in our local communities to help others experience their own new life in God?

Paul wrote, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2). Constantly working at the renewal of our minds will help us understand ourselves better and our new life in Christ. From that will spring the change that is required in our attitudes and values, in how we behave, and the priorities we live for. Our task over the coming few months is to work out what that will look like, on a practical level, as individual disciples and as the Church here in the Garioch.

Song: [O Lord all the world belong to you](#) *Click on the link*



Prayers for ourselves - Tea(m) up with God

For this you will need to make a cup of tea so, if you can, please take your Device into the kitchen but be careful not to splash it with water. Pour some water into the kettle and boil it; pray



Loving God, sometimes the quiet waters of my life I boil over with rage, my equilibrium becomes disturbed. As I listen, I can hear the angry water of the kettle which represent the anger that sometimes boils up within me. Help me channel my rage constructively. The water often makes tea for others. Help me learn the lesson of the boiling kettle.

Pour the hot water onto a tea bag in your cup or tea pot and watch what happens; pray

Loving God as I pour the water onto this tea bag the water changes colour the essence of the tea flows out into the cup. In the same way Lord, pour out your living water upon me that the essence of my being made in your image may be released. Together we will make something warm and comforting and reviving and refreshing.

Stir the tea in your cup or tea pot; pray

Loving God, stir me up that I may not be complacent. Help me to be an active disciple of Jesus my Lord. May I be disturbed that many have little water to drink, go hungry day by day, have no place to call home, or abused.

If you are using a tea pot pour some tea into a cup.

Pour in some milk; pray

Loving God, Peter writes about our craving “pure spiritual milk”^{*} help me to sup on the Word you give me that I may grow in faith and know how good you really are.

^{*} 1 Peter 2:1-3

Drink some tea; pray

Loving God, as I drink this tea, I feel its warmth, soothing and calming properties. Help me to be a soother in the world bringing warmth to relationships and calmness to people in torment or distress.

Hold the cup in your hands and remember that we often make tea as a drink to share with friends or to console in times of trouble and sadness; pray

Loving God, you hold us all in the palm of your hand. Help me to share my love for you with others:

my friends, that they may know of how precious you are to me and what you do for me,
and those in trouble or distress. that they may feel your comforting presence and know that you know them intimately even every hair upon their head and you care for them.

Amen.

Prayers for others



Loving God, we look to the world you have made and we see the scars we have made. We, too often, seek to impose our will trying to make the world as we want it to be, and make it work for our benefit, with little or no consideration for the needs of others or the impact upon them.

As we seek to keep one another safe from death by a virus we continue to take life through bullets and bombs. Bring peace to every land where there is war and conflict. Protect those who live daily with death and destruction. Comfort those who are widowed or orphaned. May those who have run for safety find security, peace, acceptance and welcome.

We treat one another badly, looking down on people who are not like us, or who behave in ways we find strange, or simply because they look a little different, or because of their poverty or lack of social status can do little for us. Help us value each person made in your

image and build a world in which all may thrive, where oppression and exploitation are confined to history. Help us to love and care for one another. Show us how to use our resources, energy and time to, feed, shelter, and educate.

Be with all working for justice. Fill the leaders of nations with compassion and empathy for others and may they govern with wisdom and integrity seeking to unite rather than divide.

As we begin to tentatively move out of lockdown, help us to find new ways of living together. May we continue to value and care for one another, recognising how our individual actions for good or bad impact on others. Help us to recognise the impact we have on the natural world and live in ways which are more sustainable reducing our carbon emissions.

Loving God we ask your blessing upon your church. Help us to be a church seeking to grow. Show us new and fruitful ways to make Christ known and to demonstrate your love in the world. Fill us with your Holy Spirit so we may move forward in faith recognising the gift he has given each of us to use in the service of your Kingdom.

We pray for your blessing on all in need today, people lonely or sad, fearful of the future, people sick or recovering, people frail in need of care from others, people bereaved.

Lord, make us a people who live today knowing that you are with us and that whatever trials or challenges we may face you know our needs and have ensured that by faith in Jesus Christ our eternal salvation is assured.

We pray in his name, Amen.

[Blessing](#) *Click on the link*



One of the consequences of us not being able to worship together is that the church anticipates a fall in income. However, we will continue to incur costs, of insurance etc. There will be little financial saving to our not meeting, yet revenues could be severely hit. Please prayerfully reflect on this and, if you are able, continue to put aside your financial offering so that you can make your contribution for the work of the church when we next meet together. Thank you.

Thank you too if you already give by standing order or by bank transfer, that is much appreciated.