

Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch Parish Church

Sunday 2nd August 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 ninth Sunday after Pentecost. May we hear God's word and be filled with his Holy Spirit

Call to Worship: Psalm 95:1-3

O come, let us sing to the LORD;
let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!
² Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!
³ For the LORD is a great God,
and a great King above all gods.

Song: [I could sing of your love for ever](#) **Click on the link**



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

We exalt you, our God and King, and will praise your name forever and ever.

Each generation wonders in amazement at your love and mercy;
each one tells stories of your working in our lives.

You are our Father, the maker of all, the giver of all good things.

Thank you that we can put aside the uncertainties of this world and rest
upon the certainties of the Kingdom for your promises are not changeable

Thank you that we can lay before you all our hurts and concerns and all that trouble us,
and leave them with you.

Thank you that with you we find healing, renewal and refreshment, and a place where we can
be at peace.

As we reflect on the past week we're all ashamed of things we've said, or not said; things we've
done, or not done; that have been unworthy of our being called your children - those times
when we have let you down and not lived as you want us to live. Forgive us when what we have
to offer in the service of your Kingdom seems so small that we are reluctant to give. Forgive us
when we find it difficult to believe that you can take the smallest offering and use it to
transform lives.

We ask for your forgiveness, healing and renewal.



We praise you that whatever our failing, thoughts and feelings you are always the same; yesterday, today and for ever. We can always depend on your welcoming love, your compassionate understanding and your gracious forgiveness.

We praise you for Jesus Christ our Saviour, for his suffering and death on the cross and his resurrection to new life, and that we may share in that new life with him. We praise you for his rule over all things and his presence in the world. We praise you for the Holy Spirit, the giver of life, who teaches and guides us.

Renew us by the power of you Holy Spirit that we may hear your words of eternal life and respond to your call to live our lives according to your will.

We pray in the name of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour using the prayer he gave us...

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 pray for the health care professionals who continue to be at the forefront fighting this global pandemic. We ask that they will keep protected and keep well. Provide them with the emotional strength they need as they work beyond normal circumstances and hours to contain the pandemic.

May every individual affected recover fast.

Comfort grieving family members who have lost their dear ones.

Guide our community leaders, government officials and decision makers. Give them wisdom and knowledge to tackle the challenges the communities are facing.

Help us as we ease lock down to remember the threat of a second spike in infections is a real threat. May we go about our lives with care and caution, continuing to protect ourselves and one another as best as we are able.

Loving God we thank you that we have an opportunity to create a new normality where we continue to recognise the impact we each have on the lives of others. Help us in the months ahead to begin to create a new awareness of the value of caring for one another.

We pray in Jesus name.. Amen.



Bible Passage

In our first Bible passage Abraham fights with God and is then blessed by God

Genesis 32:22-32 (ESV)

²² The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

²³ He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had.

²⁴ And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵ When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him.

²⁶ Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." ²⁷ And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob."

²⁸ Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." ²⁹ Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him.

³⁰ So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." ³¹ The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

Our Gospel reading is Matthew's account of Jesus feeding the multitude on the hillside.

As you read it, notice several of the themes we have been reflecting upon over the last weeks are brought together. Notice that the disciples are drawn into the ministry just as we read a few weeks ago that they were sent into the towns and villages as a response to their prayer for workers in the harvest field. Notice, Jesus doesn't send the people away, but welcomes them with hospitality. No doubt within the crowd were all sorts of people, good and bad, faithful and not so faithful, all sat together, all receiving from Jesus, just like wheat and weeds together. Notice that he does something huge and amazing with something quite small.

The opening verses of Matthew's chapter 14 tells us of the death of John the Baptist. And so our reading begins; "When Jesus heard this.."

Matthew 14: 13-22

¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.

¹⁵ Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves." ¹⁶ But Jesus said, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat."

¹⁷ They said to him, "We have only five loaves here and two fish." ¹⁸ And he said, "Bring them here to me."

¹⁹ Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass, and taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. ²⁰ And they all ate and were satisfied. And they took up twelve baskets full of the broken pieces left over. ²¹ And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Jesus feeds the crowd

We live in changing times. We've reflected over these past weeks on what 'normal' life might be like post COVID. We know that here in the Church of Scotland there are many changes taking place – larger presbyteries and grouping of parishes. Change can be unsettling. It's easy for us to be set in our ways. We often grieve for what was, because it's known, cosy and comfortable. We can be anxious about the future because it's unknown, uncertain and may require us to change too. For example, we may need to wear face masks for shopping and keep social distancing for some time. We may not like it. We may feel uncomfortable that when we want to have a chat with the postman he takes two steps back.

However, change presents opportunities. Change enables us to look at how we might do things better, more efficiently, more fruitfully. Events which we are unable to control often

mean we need to change. The changes we are experiencing within the church require us to change, it is not possible to continue in the way we've have in the past. Indeed, we learned last week that the Kingdom is like yeast in dough, living and dynamic and transforming, not static and unchanging.

Jesus had gone off to grieve the death of his cousin, John the Baptist. Just like so many of us need a little space, time to reflect and be by ourselves when a loved one, or close friend dies, Jesus went to a lonely place by himself (Matthew 14:13). But events forced him to change his plans. His space was invaded by a huge crowd. Sorrow and sadness needed to be turned into action as his heart went out to the people, and so Jesus met their needs healing the sick. But, as we read on we find an opportunity presents itself enabling Jesus to teach the disciples (and us) about their calling, to demonstrate the importance of giving, and how when we offer even the smallest thing to be used in the service of God's Kingdom it can have huge and transformative effects.

On the hillside, the disciples saw for themselves Jesus' compassion. We too, having read the Gospel and been instructed and nurtured in our faith, know all about loving neighbour and being the Good Samaritan. Yet, how often are we like the disciples on the hillside with Jesus. They saw it was getting late and that the people were hungry. Something needed to be done. So they turn to Jesus, saying, 'do something!'. Of course, they actually said, according to Matthew's account, "This place is like a desert, and it is already late. Let the crowds leave, so they can go to the villages and buy some food." They were asking Jesus to do something. We too, so often when we see a need want Jesus to do something.

Jesus' response was, 'no, you do something'; or more accurately, "They don't have to leave. Why don't you give them something to eat?"

Wow, that would have been a shock to them. Their immediate thoughts must have been, what on earth can we do?

This is typical of our discipleship, our witness to God working in our lives - our small ideas are thrown back at us with what seems a huge and impossible proposal. It would have been a daunting task feeding 5,000 on the hillside.

The disciples' response was no different to what is often our own response. They said to Jesus, 'we don't have the resources', telling Jesus they only have five loaves and two fish. In John's account of the event he records Philip saying, "It would take more than half a year's wages to buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (John 6:7)

The disciples didn't have much, just five loaves and two fish.

We may feel we don't have much to offer the people of our parish. Our response to Jesus command, "You feed them" might be "we don't have enough time, we don't have enough people, we don't have the money, the energy, the skills and abilities, the theological understanding to do what you are asking of us." We may even feel we are more like the crowd needing to be fed rather than being the providers of food.

But the people need to be fed.

Importantly, Jesus didn't moan about how little was available, he didn't send the crowd away, he didn't say we don't have anything to give them. He welcomed the crowd with hospitality and thanked God for what he did have, albeit seemingly very little and made what was available sufficient, indeed more than sufficient, for 12 baskets of scraps were collected.

What precisely Jesus did on the hillside, or does with what we bring him, is so mysterious and powerful it can't be put into words.

Jesus made a little go a long way, he made what might have just about fed two, enough to feed 5,000 men and the women and children that were there with them.

Simply offer what you have to others with welcome and hospitality, in the name of Jesus and he, will take it and bless it, and give it back to you to give to others, and by the working of the Holy Spirit will multiply it to feed the sheep of the flock in Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch.

In our passage from Genesis we read of Abraham wrestling with God through the night. Perhaps we wrestle with God through the night in a different kind of struggle. We wrestle with the worries and concerns of our lives. We sometimes wrestle with God because we want to be in control, not him. God overcame Abraham by touching his hip putting it out of joint. We know what it means to be out of joint and out of sorts, our quiet equilibrium disturbed.

When Abraham couldn't fight anymore he held on to his opponent for support. Abraham was blessed by God and we will find that God blesses us too. Abraham's life was touched for ever, God even gave him a new name, Israel; which actually means, "struggles with God." It is interesting how when we are touched by God we are given a new life and a new name, Abraham became Israel, Simon renamed as Peter, Saul became Paul.

Abraham is touched by God and his life changed. The crowd on the hillside were touched by Jesus through the compassion and work of his disciples.

Remember Jesus said "I am the bread of Life" that's bread to be shared as well as eaten. So, as we turn the page for a new chapter in the life of this parish and look towards a group with neighbouring parishes our role, is to give what we have and ask Jesus to bless it, and then take it and give it to those in our local community so they may be touched by Christ and fed - fed by love, fed by the welcome and acceptance we offer them, fed by God's word made a reality in our actions, fed by his Holy Spirit working through us, and within them.

Touch their lives for Christ, that their lives, and yours, may be transformed.

Song: The next song is a song usually sung when Holy Communion is celebrated. We may see in the feeding of the crowd on the hillside the elements of Communion; Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it and gave it to those gathered together. The song



alludes not only to the messages that we have been reflecting upon today but also back to the parable of the soils.

[In bread we bring you Lord](#) [Click on the link](#)

Prayers of the People for the People



Lord God Almighty we thank and praise you for your bountiful goodness. We thank you for the bread of life which was broken for many and sustains all who eat it.

Lord Jesus, the crowds, having been fed by you were satisfied. We bring before you, O Lord, all the people of the world and their various societies and cultures. We cry with the people of Israel and Palestine, Iraq, Syria and Yemen and the many places across the world where people live with violence, war and death on a daily basis. We pray that people will value diversity, welcome difference and instead of seeking to control resources and have power over people, to offer to all what little they have for the benefit of everyone.

Lord Jesus, as we see the corn begin to ripen in the fields around us we praise you for the food that sustains our bodies. We thank you for those throughout the world who plough and sow, for those who fish the seas, process our food and sell it to us in our shops. We thank you for the variety of foods available to us. In our wastefulness we remember those who go hungry, in our desire for cheap food, we remember those who are exploited. We ask that you will help us to use the fruits of the world wisely and that we might eliminate all that cause s people to go hungry, reliant on foodbanks or handouts, or scavenge for a morsel to eat.

Lord Jesus, feed with the bread of life those who suffer through sickness, disability, sorrow, addiction, abuse or neglect and free them from their suffering and oppression. Bless those who work in your name to relieve poverty and sickness, and also those who support others with counseling and friendship.

Lord Jesus, we thank you for our families and friends. We pray that you will provide for their needs. Help us to be good friends to others and share what you have provided for us. We bring to you, Lord, those who have suffered bereavement and we commend them to your loving care together with those who seek to bring them comfort in your name.

Lord Jesus, we ask that your church will hear the guidance of the Holy Spirit and see the vision you have for its future. Help us work co-operatively and fruitfully together, each contributing what we have enabling the flock to be fed. Help us to nurture one another in our faith and seek the miraculous things you do in people's lives.

Lord we come to you, the bread of life, give us today our daily bread and help us not to work for food that spoils but for food that endures to eternal life.

We pray in the name of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Song

Our final song today is a song of praise and thanksgiving. It is based on a number of references in Paul's letters to our adoption as children of God.



[Father God I wonder](#) [Click on the link](#)

Benediction and Blessing

Almighty God, we thank you for feeding us with the bread of life. Send us out into our communities to share this bread with others, that they too may be fed and know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. To you O Lord, be glory, honour and praise.



[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.