

**Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch Parish Church**

**Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 twelfth Sunday after Pentecost. We consider Jesus' question, "Who do you say I am?" As we do may we be filled with the Holy Spirit and hear God's Word speaking to us.

**Call to Worship: Psalm 147: 1 & 7**

Shout praises to the Lord!  
Our God is kind,  
and it is right and good  
to sing praises to him.

Celebrate and sing!  
Play your harps  
for the Lord our God.  
to sing praises to him.

**Song:** [Come on and celebrate](#) *Click on the link*

**Prayer of Praise.**

We use Psalm 138 as our prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

**Psalm 138: 1-6 (The Message)**

Almighty and eternal God,  
Thank you! Everything in me says "Thank you!"  
Angels listen as I sing my thanks.  
I kneel in worship facing your holy temple  
and say it again: "Thank you!"  
Thank you for your love,  
thank you for your faithfulness;  
Most holy is your name, most holy is your Word.

The moment I called out, you stepped in;  
you made my life large with strength.  
When they hear what you have to say, God,  
all earth's kings will say "Thank you."  
They'll sing of what you've done:  
"How great the glory of God!"  
And here's why: God, high above, sees far below;  
no matter the distance, he knows everything about us.

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



Heavenly Father, we come to you the source of all life and love. We bow before you, conscious of our sinfulness and seeking your forgiveness, your pardon and your peace.

For words spoken that were untrue, unclean, unkind, forgive us.

For all careless work, for all wrong deeds, or any action which hurt another, or which made it easier for another to go wrong, forgive us.

For blindness to the truth, for refusal to face facts, forgive us.

For all dishonest thinking, forgive us.

For all pride, for all wrong desires and for putting out faith in our own strength rather than in Jesus Christ our Saviour, forgive us.

We thank you O Lord that in the New Covenant, through Jesus Christ, you have promised to forgive the sins of all who truly repent. We thank you that you sent Jesus into the world and with loving arms outstretched upon the cross for us, he broke the chains of evil and destruction, and through his victory over the death, we are made a new creation through faith. ...

Father God, fill us with your Holy Spirit. By his power and gifting enable us to do your work, and to be Christ's body in the world. We pray in his name the prayer he taught the church, saying together;

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 help us to go about our daily business with great care.

We thank you for the care of others that have brought us to this point. Help us not to be care-less and destroy all we have achieved.

Guide the leaders of nations as they continue to struggle to keep the number of deaths low.

Be with those seeking vaccines; may their work be fruitful so that we might be able to protect one another.

Help us not forget our neighbours, those who live close, those in the wider community, and neighbours across the world; people vulnerable in one way or another. May they know they are loved through our actions and care, and may they know your presence, healing, and peace. Amen.



## Bible Passage

In our first Bible passage Paul write about our being living sacrifices. As we read let us reflect on what it means to live and love sacrificially.

### Romans 12:1-8 (ESV)

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

<sup>3</sup>For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. <sup>4</sup>For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, <sup>5</sup>so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. <sup>6</sup>Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; <sup>7</sup>if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; <sup>8</sup>the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

In our Gospel reading Jesus asks that question “who do you say I am?”. “I Am” is an important phrase throughout the Bible. It directs us to God for God first uses this when he appeared to Moses in the burning bush. “I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am has sent me to you.’” (Exodus 3:14) John records seven “I am sayings” of Jesus in his account of the Gospel, (I am the gate, the bread of life etc). In the book of Revelation God refers to himself as “I am the Alpha and the Omega” (Revelation 1:8; 21:6 & 22:13). We read in today’s Gospel passage, Peter making his commitment of faith that Jesus is the Christ. As we read this passage let us hear this question asked of each of us and let us reflect on how we respond.

### Matthew 16: 13-20

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"<sup>14</sup> And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." <sup>15</sup> He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" <sup>16</sup> Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." <sup>17</sup> And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." <sup>20</sup> Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ.

#### "Who do you say I am?"

We've come to a point in the life of the church, nationally and locally, where we need to stop and look back. There are many changes occurring to presbyteries, and parishes are considering groupings with neighbouring parishes. We know the number of ministers available to the Church is declining. So, where have we come from? What's the way ahead?

Jesus had taken the disciples some 30 to 40 miles north from Bethsaida, at the north end of the Sea of Galilee, to Caesarea Philippi in the foothills of Mount Hermon near the source of the river Jordan. Caesarea Philippi looked right down the Jordan valley. From where they stood they would have been able to look back at where they had been – and to where they were going... and beyond. It's the point where the disciples look back at what they have experienced, what they've seen, what they've heard on their journey with Jesus since he called them to be fishers of men on that day he met them tending their nets by the lakeside.

Today is a moment for us also to look back, what have we experienced, what have we learned on our journey with Jesus since he called us to follow him.

Jesus is also taking stock of his ministry to date asking, "Who do people say I am?" Perhaps the answer to that question would impact on what he needed to do in the future.

The disciples say that different people have different ideas about Jesus. Some thought he was John the Baptist, others, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets. I wonder how we might answer that question today; who do people say Jesus is?

Just pause on that question for a moment before you read on. Who do people say Jesus is? ...

The disciples were beginning to understand more about Jesus. They had seen many miraculous things Jesus had done, feeding multitudes, walking on water, calming storms, healing people from leprosy and other diseases. They had listened to his teaching and even been sent out in his name, preaching, healing, and casting out demons.

Now he asks them a searching question, “Who do *you* say I am?”

It was relatively easy for the disciples to tell Jesus who others thought he was, but this direct question puts them on the spot; “What do you think, who do you say I am?” That’s the point at which they have to look back at what they had experienced with Jesus, what they had seen, what had heard? Who is Jesus?

For Simon, the penny had dropped. He responded to Jesus question, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Simon had understood who Jesus is.

Jesus decides to give Simon a new name, Peter, meaning ‘the rock’. Jesus said to him “on this rock I will build my church.” It’s not clear if Jesus is saying “I will build my church of the faith that Peter has expressed in calling me the Christ.” Or whether Jesus is saying that Peter will be a founding Father of the church. Possibly Jesus had both interpretations in mind. The church is built on faith in Jesus; Peter was one of church’s leading elders in Jerusalem following Jesus’ ascension.

Jesus metaphorically gives Peter the keys of the Kingdom. The faith Peter declared proclaimed the Good News of Jesus. The post-resurrection church God built on Peter’s leadership also proclaimed the Good News of Jesus. Peter holds the keys to the Kingdom. He is the one God called and used to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. Peter himself wrote these words. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.” (1 Peter 1:3-4)

Peter wrote those words about thirty years after Jesus’ ascension. Looking down the Jordan Valley from Caesarea Philippi Peter would not have known how events would unfold and what was to happen to Jesus, but he grasped that Jesus is the Christ.

So, let us return to Jesus’ question; “who do you say I am?”. How do you respond?

As I consider this question, a host of others are raised in my mind.

- Do I believe that Jesus is the Son of the living God?
- Do I believe that Jesus is one person of the Godhead, the supreme God of the universe?
- Do I believe that, through him all things were made?
- Do I believe that Jesus who took on human flesh, lived among us?
- Do I believe that Jesus sacrificed himself upon the cross as an atonement for my sin?
- Do I believe that God loves me so much that through faith in his Son he regards me worthy to stand in his presence and offers me everlasting life lived at one with him?

Do I believe that?

If I can answer ‘yes’ to these questions, what does that mean?

If we are willing to claim Jesus as Lord and submit ourselves to him, we are invited to live with him forever. This is something no prophet, teacher, or revolutionary can offer. It's an invitation that requires nothing from us. It's not a reward for good behaviour, or for following God's commands, nor is it earned by doing good works. It is simply a free gift from God, something God gives us because he loves us.

When we declare Jesus as the Christ, when we declare Jesus as Lord of our lives, we begin to open up a personal relationship with him.

Peter's relationship with Jesus wasn't perfect. He denied him three times when Jesus was on trial. But deep down he never lost faith in who Jesus was, Jesus understood that, reinstating Peter as the leader of the church when he called him to 'feed my sheep'.

It's what Peter did. When we declare Jesus as Lord, we offer ourselves as '*living sacrifices*', as Paul puts it in his letter to the Romans. We offer our lives as a spiritual act of worship. Worship is not simply an hour a week, a time when we read a Bible passage and say our prayers and sing a hymn or two. Worship is a 24/7 act of commitment when we give our lives to God allowing ourselves to be changed by him, our minds transformed by his Word impacting on our attitudes, values and actions, throughout our daily lives.

As faithful believers we become part of the body of Christ on earth, members of God's church each given a gift by the Holy Spirit to use sacrificially in the service of the Kingdom. Worship is allowing God to work through us using our gift to transform the world by making Jesus known.

Simon was given the name Peter, meaning rock. The church was built on the kind of faith Peter proclaimed and, after Jesus' ascension, Peter's leadership of Christ's followers. Jesus, of course is the cornerstone that holds the building together. So, perhaps Peter was conscious that he only shared in the responsibility of building the church with every other person who declares a faith in Jesus, for he wrote;

"you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 2:4)

So, Jesus asks each of us, "who do you say I am?"

Then, with Paul, we ask ourselves, what gift has the Holy Spirit given me to help in the construction of the church Jesus is building?

**Song:** If you can, make our next song your own prayer confessing Christ as your Lord and Saviour.

[Before the throne of God above](#) *Click on the link*

### **Prayers of the People for the People**

Paul wrote to the Philippians; "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." Let us pray.



Lord Jesus, we proclaim you as the Christ.

We know you as the Prince of Peace and so bring to you the war-torn lands of the earth. We pray for those whose lives are changed by war and conflict, those who are blinded or burned; those who have lost limbs, their minds, their health and strength for ever. We pray for those who live in anguish, whose lives will never be the same again; for those who have lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods and for those who live each day in fear of death. Help us to turn places of tears and unhappiness into the paradise you made the world to be.

Lord Jesus, we know you as the young child who fled from Bethlehem to Egypt to escape death. Our hearts go out to those who take long and dangerous journey across deserts and sea to escape war, violence, abuse and poverty. Help us to have compassion and to see the needs of others rather than the problems of our own discomfort. We place all this in your hands and ask that you will grant the governments, police forces and security services across Europe, wisdom and understanding, that together we might find a way of helping the desperate and to give them hope, and a life of peace.

Indeed, Lord Jesus we know you as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We bring to you our Prime Minister, Boris Johnson and First Minister Nicola Sturgeon, and for all leaders of nations and peoples and all in positions of responsibility; give them wisdom, a regard for your commands, respect for human life; may act with honesty, integrity; with care and compassion for the poor and the marginalised treating all with dignity and respect.

Lord Jesus, we know you as the Good Shepherd who seeks out the lost and cares for the flock. Comfort and support all who find each day a challenge, the addicted, the lonely, the depressed, those neglected, abused or exploited. Remove all fear, restore self-esteem, unlock the shackles and set free.

Lord Jesus we know you for giving sight to the blind and healer of the sick. We lay before you the needs of all who are in hospital or ill at home. Place your healing hand upon them, may they know your presence with them and your love for them.

Lord Jesus we proclaim you as the Christ, the one who triumphed over death rising to sit at the right hand of the Father. We pray for all who are facing death and all who mourn the loss of loved ones. Bring them comfort in their sadness but help them to rejoice in the knowledge that by faith in you, you give us eternal life lived at one with God in his Kingdom of love and peace.

Lord Jesus we know you as the chosen and precious cornerstone on which your church is built, and on which we build our lives. Grant us resolve to reflect your presence in all we do and say, give us a passion for the Gospel and for proclaiming your Word, a desire to grow in our life of prayer, our study of your Word revealed to us in the scriptures, a longing to grow in our relationship with you and a hunger to make disciples of all people.

Lord Jesus we pray in confidence that you will hear our prayer. Amen.

## **Benediction and Blessing**

God of life, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts, together with the giving ourselves for the work of you Kingdom, demonstrate our faith in your Son our Lord, Jesus Christ.

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

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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.