

Blairdaff and Chapel of Garioch Parish Church

Sunday 30th 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 thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost. May we hear God's Word and be filled with his Holy Spirit.

Call to Worship: Psalm 107: 1

*Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*

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



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

Gracious Father, your power is beyond measure, your wisdom beyond all understanding, your love beyond all telling. You have put eternity into our hearts and made us hunger and thirst for you. Satisfy the longings you have placed within us that we may find you in life and find life in you.



You made us in your image with a mind to know you, a heart to love you and a will to serve you; but we have failed you and fail to grow in your likeness. We have been careless in our thoughts, cruel in our words and shameful in our actions. We are indifferent to a world made sad by want and wastefulness; we pass by on the other side when we see our neighbor in need; we wander from the way that leads to peace. God of life grant us your forgiveness and renew us.

Lord of life, we thank you that you have called us together in the name of Jesus Christ and that through faith in him you count us worthy to be adopted as your children, and to stand in your presence and to receive your inheritance of eternal life.

We thank you for all your goodness and love towards us; for the joy of family and friends, the activities that fulfill our lives, for your strength that supports us and your love that comforts us, both in times of our sadness and in times of our joy.

We thank you that through Jesus death on the cross our sin is forgiven and that by faith in him we are renewed, made worthy to be counted as your children and receive your inheritance of eternal life. By his cross and resurrection he has set us free and opened the gate of glory. Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world; our hope is built on him alone.

We thank you for the Holy Spirit at work in the church and in our hearts revealing your truth, renewing our lives and bringing us to your eternal kingdom.

To you O Lord, be all honour and glory, power, majesty and dominion. Praise be to you, may the whole earth sing your praise, one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

A Prayer for this time of Coronavirus

Loving God, we are not people of fear, we are people of courage.
We are not people who protect our own safety: we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.

We are not people of greed, we are people of generosity.
We are your people God, giving and loving, wherever we are, whatever it costs, for as long as it takes, wherever you call us.

Loving God, we place into your care all who are affected by coronavirus, through illness, isolation or anxiety,
May they may find relief and recovery.

May people vulnerable and the fearful,
those gravely ill and the dying,
know your comfort and peace.

Direct those who are guiding our nation and shaping national policies: equip them to make wise decisions.

Bless health practitioners and medical researchers. Grant them dedication, resilience, perseverance and protection.

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

Barbara Glasson, President of the Methodist Conference and Church of England; Adapted



Bible Passages

Our focus today will be on the New Testament reading from Paul's letter to the Romans. He writes about love.

Romans 12:9-21 (ESV)

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honour. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honourable in the sight of all. ¹⁸ If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. ¹⁹ Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰ To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Matthew 16:21-28 (ESV)

²¹ From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. ²² And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you." ²³ But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."

²⁴ Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ²⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

It's been an emotional time over these past weeks. Sadness at leaving Aberdeenshire, the parish and you, excited about a new phase of life, excited about new birth in a few weeks, although we'll likely not see our grandchild for some time except over the internet. We generally get emotional, with tears of joy or sadness when we love someone or something.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul talks about relationships, both those on a personal level, within the Christian communities of first century Rome and those external relationships with the civic authorities and wider world. He would have been well aware that the little house churches were an endangered species, vulnerable to disintegration due to internal squabbles and to the central government's suspicions about clubs and societies and religious sects (especially those that were not directly aligned with an ethnic identity like the Jews).

Paul understood that the vision of a Christian community was unrealisable without love.

Paul's exhortation to love is rooted in scriptural (Old Testament) allusions – from, for example, Isaiah, Job, & Proverbs. He also appeals to standards of behaviour that were widely accepted, brotherly love, obligations to provide hospitality to strangers, but reinforces them with the teachings of Jesus.

The passage highlights no distinction between how we should love those we know, or are close to us, and those who are more distant. We are to live in harmony with one another, devoted to brotherly love, sharing with those in need, giving hospitality, sharing one another's joys and supporting one another in sadness, putting others before self.

You show a lot of love, and (generally) live in harmony with one another. I know that there is great support for one another as you look out for those in need at particular times, rejoice with those who have things to celebrate and mourning with those who grieve.

But are there people I just can't stand, can't get along with, would rather not meet in the shop or I'd rather didn't live in the village? Am I in dispute over a boundary? How do we live-up to showing honour to others, not claiming to be wiser than we are, how can we better associate with those considered of lowly position, as Paul exhorts us to do? What does this passage teach us about our attitudes towards those we know personally yet find so difficult to relate to.

As a nation, do we live in harmony with the world? Are there those who we regard as enemies? Are there those for whom we do not have brotherly love?

What does this passage teach us about our relationships with other countries, Iraq, Syria, Russia for example, or our attitudes towards terrorists?

Paul quotes Jesus in verse 14 "Bless those who persecute you" (Matthew 5:44). He quotes the Proverbs 20:22 in verse 17 "don't retaliate" and the old Law in verse 19, "don't take revenge" (Leviticus 19:18).

Pelagius the 4th-5th century theologian wrote "The enemy has overcome you when he makes you like himself."

Jesus said, "If someone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other also. You have heard it said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...For if you love those who love you, what

reward do you have, and if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing more than others?" (Matthew 5:38-48).

Our expression is that, 'two wrongs don't make a right.' How should we treat our enemy, those we don't like or can't get along with? We should give him the things he needs, if he is hungry, food; if he is thirsty a drink. That's all fairly alien to our culture. But then Christ does turn the world on its head.

Paul realised that love can become a formalised expression, a cloak of pretense that hides an agenda of personal advancement or coercive manipulation. He says, "love must be sincere", verse 9 – not false. It is no good saying that we love someone but not showing it in our actions.

It can be very difficult sometimes to do the right thing. In our gospel reading Jesus said that we should take up our cross and follow him. Take up our cross! A symbol of a violent and humiliating instrument of State control. Those who follow Jesus must not be intimidated into compliance and accommodation of the ways of the world. Let's listen to what others have to say, our friends, our favourite newspaper journalist, the Government and opposition, *but* let's also listen to God. Then we can ask ourselves the question whether what we hear in the world is in accordance with God's teaching and his will for our lives. We can then make up our own minds about which way we should turn.

In verse two Paul wrote, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." In our attitudes, values and actions and our relationships we must remain true to the Gospel and commandments of Jesus. That isn't always easy, sometimes we have to 'cling-on' or "hold fast to what is good" as Paul puts it in verse 9.

Love can be lost in families, and that's very sad. But, for most of us, although we have differences in families, we usually find ways to overcome these, and we show love rejoicing and mourning together.

When it comes to our relationships with others we should do the same, whoever they are and whatever they may have done. Verse 21, "Do not overcome evil with evil, but overcome evil with good." That's not always the easiest thing to do. Fortunately, the Holy Spirit lives within us to encourage and equip us to love. When, despite our best efforts we fail, because sometimes we do, we know that in his mercy God forgives.

As for vengeance, "Vengeance is mine" says the Lord. Avenging is God's prerogative.

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



Prayers of the People for the People



You, O God, love us and you call us from before the moment of our first breath. You love us as a Father loves his child before he ever sees it.

You love us, O God, as we mature and seek our way, You love us as we become aware of the world around us, and you love us as a mother loves her child as she sees it become proud and tall.

You love us, O God, as we mature, when we say 'no'; and when we begin to stray. You love us as a parent love its child, even when it disobeys.

Lord hear our prayers of love for those around us.

Lord, your love has influence wherever it is shown; a shoulder to lean on, a willing ear to listen, a task performed, a gift given, a selfless act. We pray for politicians and leaders, all those in positions of authority who also walk in your company. May they show your love and share your word through their actions and service, and may they and those they serve be blessed.

Lord, your love demands to be noticed, exposes that which has been hidden, reveals the truth that has been concealed within our hearts. We pray for those who exploit the poor, those whose business is slavery or persecution and those who hold power over life or death. We pray that your word and your love will bring change, and bring light into hearts darkened by oppression.

Lord your love extends to the dispossessed, people lonely, homeless, thirsty, and tired. In your love, hear the cry of those who yearn for love; people living in fractured families, broken homes, neglected, unwanted, alone. Bring hope and sustenance, physical and spiritual food, acceptance, belonging and comfort to hungry bodies and un-nourished souls. May they feel the warmth your embrace.

Your love reaches out with a healing hand. Touch all who are sick in mind or body, bring healing and wholeness. We thank you for your gift of eternal life through faith in your Son, our Lord, Jesus Christ. We thank you that when earthly life is over you give us new spiritual bodies and we experience no hurt, no pain, no fear.

In these next moments we bring to you, O God, the concerns of our hearts and our prayer for those we know who are in particular need today, and we give you thanks for all joys and blessings you give us...

Loving God, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ who have us this prayer, prayed by your faithful people all over the world;

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.

(Prayers adapted from those by John Birch at www.faithandworship.com; © John Birch, 2016)

Song: [Let there be love shared among us](#) *Click on the link*



Benediction and Blessing

How great is the love the Father has lavished upon us, that we should God.



Let us love one another for love comes from God.

God is love. Whoever live in love lives in God and God lives in them. *(1 John 3:1 & 4:7,16)*

[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.

This is the last of the services I send to you. There are a number of local parishes offering on-line worship at this time when we need to avoid meeting together because of the risks of COVID-19 infection. Some are a live stream and some can be accessed at any time.

Services from Kemnay Parish Church can be accessed here

<https://kemnayparish.church/wp/>

Services from Inverurie West Kirk can be accessed here

<http://www.inveruriewestchurch.org/westcast.html>

Services from Belhelvie Parish Church can be accessed here

<http://www.belhelviechurch.com/>

God bless,
Martyn

