

Giffnock: the Park Church



FAITH

*is not believing that God can
it is knowing that He will.*



Sunday 9th August 2020

Good morning everyone,

I have put together yet another devotional as we enter the 21st week of the story of coping with Covid. As always I hope you are well and are managing to contend with all the changes and restrictions as they apply and as they change. It has been a dramatic week domestically and internationally.

Across the nation many will have looked at the images of places like Brighton Beach where social distance was a vain hope while at the other end of the country in Aberdeen the stupid and irresponsible behaviour of a few football players put their fellow team members at risk causing them and an entire city to be quarantined. Across Europe, Air corridors between the UK and other nations are being shut down because of rising infection rates causing many UK Holiday makers to be stranded and when arriving home will have to quarantine for 14 days upon their return. People talk of a second spike while international politics, mired by the more powerful nations having spats with one another, sees this disease runs increasingly rampant across their nations that struggle to cope with the initial outbreak, much less worry about a second spike. With immigrants across in France now unable to smuggle themselves onto the back of lorries these days, they set sail for Blighty in the calm but busy waters of the English Channel in the vain hope that the Seas don't drown them and the Royal Navy or UK Border Agency don't catch them. To top all that off an explosion at the port of Beirut has torn through the Lebanon's Capitol city causing death and grief for many, injuring Thousands. That was the week that was.

Malcolm Wild and Alwyn Wall are Christian songwriters from the 1980's and will probably not be names on everyone's lips but their song sums up the story here beautifully - " THE WORLD NEEDS JESUS". Our faith in God today needs to be about not just "believing that God can but that He will."

I hope you find this devotional to be enriching, encouraging and a reminder of the challenge to remain Faithful to Him who loved us and gave himself for us.

With best wishes from all at the manse

Calum D. Macdonald

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*Prayer delights God's ear; it melts His heart; and opens His hand.
God cannot deny a praying soul.*

- Thomas Watson

Let us pray....

Our Father in Heaven, at the start of this new week on what is our day of rest, we pray that this time we share with you is a time where we once again recognise your Glory, understanding perhaps in just a small way something of the magnitude of your Power over creation, Your Majesty that reigns over time and space, Your love that knows no bounds and Your Grace that is ever present and ever willing.

Father we thank You for the precious gift of your Son Jesus, whose life was a gift to the world, whose death resolved the problem of Sin and whose rising again brings eternal life to all who believe in Him.


Enlighten the eyes of our hearts this day that we might see you, and notice how you're at work in us and through us. Give us wisdom to make the best choices, fill us with a desire to seek after you more than anything else in this world. Let your Spirit and power breathe through us again, bringing freshness and newness of life.

Forgive us for all the ways we fail to honour You. Forgive the wrong heart and mindset that we bring at times, forgive us the things we have done when we shouldn't as well as the things we should have done but haven't. Forgive us for what we have said to others and for being unwilling to forgive others in the first place. Most of all forgive us not because we deserve it but because Jesus asks it and our Trust is in Him.

By Your Spirit, work within each one of us to be more like our Saviour, always following his example. Encourage us in our faith, give us endurance for the challenges we face, courage to stand up for what we believe and Grace to help others find faith

Thank you that you are greater than anything we may face in our day. Thank you that your presence goes with us, and that your joy is never dependent on our circumstances, that it is our true and lasting strength, no matter what we're up against. We ask once again for that sense of your Peace at work within us, that it would guard our hearts and minds in you. We ask for your grace to cover us this day and the days to come that we might bring glory and Honour to Our Father and Heaven

In Jesus' Name,
Amen.

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| Monday | Tuesday |
| <p>Pray for those who are family or friends struggling with illness</p> <p>Pray for those who are ill in hospital undergoing investigation, surgery or treatment</p> <p>Pray for those in Care or being cared for at home</p> <p>Pray for all who grieve as they mourn the death of one they loved</p> | <p>Pray for our Sovereign Queen and her household</p> <p>Pray for the Those appointed to Office in the Westminster Parliament, the Scottish Parliament and Local Authority</p> <p>Pray that they know God's Wisdom & guidance finding integrity in their decisions</p> |
| Wednesday | Thursday |
| <p>Pray for all who Work in Health & Social Care, that they are kept free from infection and transmission of infection</p> <p>Pray for all in our Emergency Services especially at this time of health crisis</p> <p>Pray for our scientists that they may be inspired in the research they do that will save lives</p> | <p>Pray for all branches of the Armed Services</p> <p>For those serving at sea</p> <p>For those protecting our skies near and far</p> <p>For those on land in a Combat posting elsewhere in the world</p> <p>Pray for their families back home</p> <p>Pray for the Chaplaincy services as they minister to them</p> |
| Friday | Saturday |
| <p>Pray for the nations of the world today</p> <p>Pray for those in Conflict with one another where tensions are running high – may they find the path of peace and avoid tension and bloodshed</p> <p>Pray for the nations of the 3rd world as they struggle to contain Covid19</p> <p>Pray for South America, for the United States, Russia and China</p> | <p>Pray for the Church and its mission to reach all across the world with the Gospel</p> <p>Pray for those who are persecuted for their faith in distant lands and in prison</p> <p>Pray for those who are Called to Missionary Service</p> <p>Pray for all those missionary Societies looking to serving distant lands, in Africa, South America, the lands of the Far East, Israel & the Middle east</p> |
| Sunday | Notes: |
| <p><u>Pray</u> for the Church in Scotland, our National Church and all other Denominations</p> <p><u>Pray</u> for the Nation of Scotland that it might return again to God's Call</p> <p><u>Pray</u> for our church and other locally, our Kirk Session and Congregational Board.</p> <p><u>Pray</u> for the hardships being faced at this time</p> <p><u>Pray</u> for the households of every church member.</p> <p><u>Pray</u> that God will keep us and sustain us</p> |  |

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Bible Reading Romans 15 : 1 – 13 **(New International Version)**

15 We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. ² Each of us should please our neighbours for their good, to build them up. ³ For even Christ did not please himself but, as it is written: “The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.” ⁴ For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.

⁵ May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, ⁶ so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

⁷ Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. ⁸ For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews^[b] on behalf of God’s truth, so that the promises made to the patriarchs might be confirmed ⁹ and, moreover, that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy.

As it is written:

***“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles;
I will sing the praises of your name.”^[c]***

¹⁰ Again, it says,

“Rejoice, you Gentiles, with his people.”^[d]

¹¹ And again,

***“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles;
let all the peoples extol him.”^[e]***

¹² And again, Isaiah says,

***“The Root of Jesse will spring up,
one who will arise to rule over the nations;
in him the Gentiles will hope.”^[f]***

¹³ May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

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Hi Everyone

What a turbulent time we are living through, news events unfolding as they are with the spread of Covid19 across the world seeming to be out of control in certain parts of the world and holiday makers having to go into quarantine upon their return. Here in Scotland footballers misbehaved on a night out in Aberdeen not observing the social distance protocols and now they and half their team members are in quarantine to limit the spread of infection potentially. Meanwhile many just finishing life in school are left with huge questions about the fairness of their qualifications awarded and potential biased against them. Meanwhile, across the world stage, we all saw how lives and livelihoods have been shattered as a massive explosion on the port of Beirut in the Middle East ripped through the capitol City of Beirut. This explosion caused by fertiliser, was second in scale only to that of the atomic bombs dropped on Japan's cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki 75 years ago to bring about the end of World War 2, having had 10% the destructive Power of these atomic weapons that thus far have only been used once in the history of Nuclear armament thankfully.

How do we respond to this as Christians today when we are left thinking about these things that we see on the newsfeeds and read in the papers? What is the Christian Response? To understand how best we answer this question we must, I think, visit the story of Paul the Apostle writing to the early church in Rome. This was a fellowship established by the Apostle Peter and it is thought that Paul, never having visited the Church before but keen to do so as part of his journey to Spain, writes this letter to the church there. His Letter is thought to be the theologically richest of all his letters and perhaps we can see why when he is writing to bear his credentials to this young church who have not met him before. I used to attend the Spring Harvest Conferences many years ago. Quite often as the next speaker was being introduced to this gathering of over 5000 people, many of whom had

never heard the man, they would begin by giving an introduction highlighting some of the things he had been involved with in the church and places he had visited. Sometimes they would even talk of the academic skills he had brought and the standing he was held in by his contemporaries. The Letter to the Romans is held by some to be such an introduction where Paul Looks to help a fledgling congregation contend with many of the issues that are impacting church life elsewhere and how they might resolve things by taking on board Paul's experience of places elsewhere. So when those, especially those of a Jewish background wanting to stick with Jewish form and ritual as part of their new found faith which clashed with those who didn't see this to be quite so important as Christians who had a gentile background, his letter offers some advice as to what the way forward might be which might help get beyond their differences. This apparently true story that follows might help us understand things from Paul's and I think Jesus' perspective.

A school boy sees another 'nerdy' looking school boy in Spectacles. (In Glasgow we would have called such a boy a SWOT.) He was carrying a huge pile of books and it was well known that he had been an easy target of the school bullies for quite some time. And sure enough on this occasion the Bullies pushed him over and all his books went flying. The boy who sees this goes to help the other boy pick up all the books. Carrying them for him, he invites him to a game of football but then also asked why he is carrying quite so many books. His reply was that he had a lot of Homework to do. That incident saw them become the best of friends and as the years unfold the 'nerdy' boy turns into a handsome young man who does extremely well at school and he was asked to be the Year's Valedictorian and as such was to give a graduation speech. In that speech he shocked everyone, none moreso than his friend, by telling everyone of that particular day that he was being bullied he actually had cleared out his locker of all books and was going home to commit suicide! Things did not pan out as planned because his friend came to help him carry, not only his books, but also his burden and that because of that kind act of friendship, he did not take his life! One of the strongest guiding principles in this story is in the New Testament, couched in the opening words of the text of our Devotional today.

“We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. ² Each of us should please our neighbours for their good, to build them up.” (Romans 15: 1 & 2)

Paul in this instance I think echoes the command of Jesus very Strongly, "that you love one another as I have loved You." (John 15: 12) He echoes that sentiment elsewhere in his letters, e.g. Galatians 6: 2, "*Bear one another's burdens and thus you will fulfil the law of Christ.*"

To fulfil that mandate, it is my belief that there are several things that we will need to be able to do that. These Things are I think spoken of or implied in Romans 15: 1 -13.

- A) THE STRENGTH OF ENDURANCE (Vs 5)
- B) THE VALUE OF ENCOURAGEMENT (Vs 5)
- C) THE SUSTENANCE OF HOPE (Vs 13)
- D) THE PLACE AND PRIORITY OF FAITH. (Vs 13)

Endurance is a feature of Christian living in so many stories where it might involve persecution, or trial or hardships where everything just seems to be closing in on you and the options available to you seem to be running out. The one thing we can say about being a Christian is that it will not isolate you from the impact of things happening around about you. God will however give you the stamina and fortitude to come through it. The number of times I have spoken with someone going through a health scare or a particular hardship and they say once it's all by... "I don't know how I got through it!" HMS Endurance was a ship designed not for war but as an ice breaker built to contend with the temperature extremes of the South Atlantic and in particular the Antarctic. The crew who first sailed in that ship would not know for definite its capacity to "Endure" until it was in the southern Atlantic and Antarctic waters. We never know if we can endure until the day comes when it has to happen - then we know. We should take heart that God's promise is that we can endure.

Encouragement is described elsewhere in the New Testament as a ministry all of its own accord. Scots are stereotypically not always good at encouragement. In my days at the North Parish in Saltcoats, having heard the choir rehearse a particular song that Thursday evening, I was asked how did it sound. To let you understand, the choir meeting was not so much a music rehearsal as a social occasion and if the truth be told was it was not good but I couldn't tell them that as I wouldn't have had a choir that Sunday so I relied upon the wisdom of Glasgow Parlance to say to them, " Aye It's Noe Bad!" The Bullies in our school boy story would be typical of the impact of bullying in that they bring low or break people down in order to make them look better or more powerful. Christian living is certainly not about bullying, it

should instead be about building one another up. Our churches need to get past our Scottish/Glasgow penchant for understating another person's value for fear of giving them a "Big Heid". Everyone needs encouragement and everyone should encourage others, if for no other reason than to follow our Saviour's example.

Hope is the thing that keeps us going at times when we cannot see how things will pan out. We begin to decorate a room and you are not sure of the colour picked for the walls but you hope it's going to turn out okay and usually to one's relief it does turn out okay after all. Paul writes earlier in his letter to the Romans That "**Hope does not disappoint us**". (Romans 5:5) It is a terrible thing to lose hope because it will strip you of any endurance and make it harder to receive encouragement. The caution of this week's news exam results will affirm for some of our young folk's hopes and dash the aspirations of others. As Christians we can offer to others a Hope that goes beyond these things with a promise about the things of eternity and God's promise to them in Jesus which can offer endurance for these moments of fear, doubt and disappointment to give them that endurance they need and find the encouragement they can to keep going knowing at some point they will see God's hand has been at work after all.

Faith is not believing that God can, it is believing that God Will. Some might say that this is the point we should have started with but I felt that this should be the point that we finish with and it is in keeping with the context of the letter. Paul's conclusion in the first half of Romans 15 speaks about the consequences of faith as being filled with joy and peace from the very Spirit of God that will enable us to endure, to encourage us to keep going and to fill us with hope no matter what may befall. Faith in Jesus is of course what opens the door of heaven, it is faith in Jesus that resolves the problem our sinfulness in God's eyes, it is our faith in Jesus that secures our eternity in Heaven, it is our faith that helps us to endure all things, to encourage others to endure all things and to remind ourselves that our hopes will not be disappointed.

We may not how this pandemic will run its course, how many waves there will be, how long a vaccine will take, how we will find work again having lost a job, how the world will look in Post Covid19 times, but through Faith in Jesus we can find endurance, take encouragement and always see hope.

Have a great week

Calum D. Macdonald

A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring a cluster of autumn leaves in the top-left and bottom-right corners. The border is composed of elegant swirls and small, diamond-shaped ornaments.

*In the Week
that lies ahead It is by*

*By Faith, we Live.
By Love, we Serve.
By Patience, we Understand.
By Trials, we gain wisdom.
By Sharing, we give Joy.*

*It is by the Father the Son
and The Spirit we
Know Blessing*