

Giffnock : the Park Church



Sunday 27th December 2020

Hi Folks,

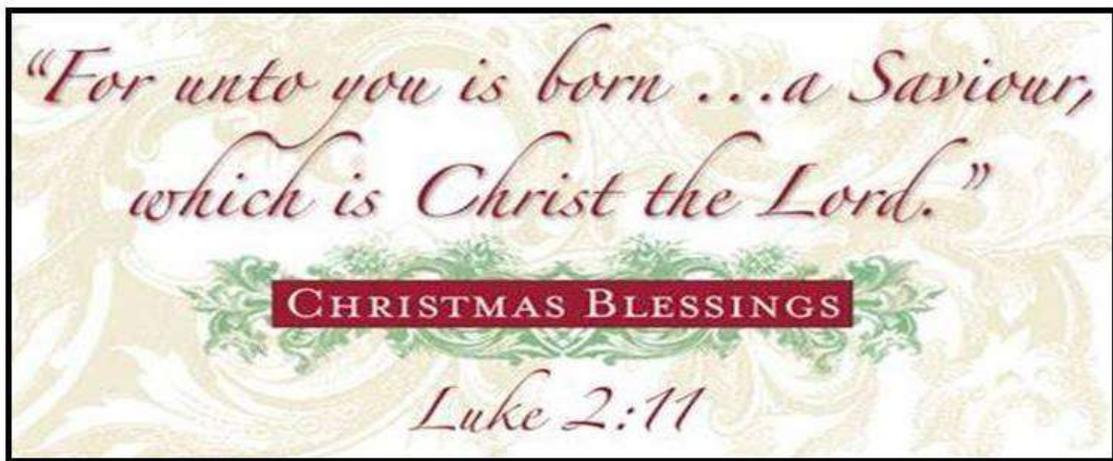
I asked Calum that since it was the last Sunday of the year if I could do the letter for today's Reflection and he was delighted to let me. This has been a very tough year for everyone and especially so because we have not been able to meet regularly on a Sunday at Church. However, I am sure that it will be all the more special when we will be able to get together again to worship with hymn singing, readings, children's addresses and sermons again followed by fellowship afterwards with tea and coffee which we will hopefully be able to do some time in 2021 soon.

I have always felt personally that spending time In Church is important. It's not so easy trying to worship and praise the Lord just in your quiet time, but I still know how important it is to spend time with the Lord and I know from what some of you have told me that you have found reading the Bible a source of comfort during this unpredictable time.

The Sunday School Nativity this year was done by the children videoing their part and sending it to Calum for editing. Everyone was fabulous and with Charlie, Emily and Abigail doing most of the narration it all came across so well. I especially liked Charlie's closing remarks reminding us to read the story in the bible of the nativity because no matter what slant any Sunday School or School Nativity puts on it we should still read about the birth of Jesus in his Word.

I hope, like many of you, that in 2021 we will return to a more normal way of life and that once again we will be able to meet in church and enjoy singing together and have lots of fellowship, but until then Calum And I would want to wish you all God's richest blessings for 2021.

With best wishes
Wilma Macdonald



May you be filled with the wonder of Mary, the obedience of Joseph, the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the determination of the magi, and the peace of the Christ Child.

Let us Pray,

Father in heaven it has been our privilege to dwell again on the Christmas story. We want to come to You in these moments in the quietness of our homes and thank you for what that means to us and for us. We thank You that such was your love for a fallen, broken world and creation, that Your Son was given as a permanent solution to the problem of Sin.

Loving Father, As we remember the birth of Jesus, may the song of the angels, the gladness of the shepherds, and the worship of the wise men stir our Hearts to that place of worship and devotion.

As we remember the life of Jesus may we see the ultimate Example of One who trusts wholly, lives faithfully and serves Humbly.

As we remember the Saviour who died, may we confess our sinfulness and inconsistency in living for you our Father in Heaven and we rejoice in the Christmas Babe who became the Easter Saviour.

As we remember a Risen Saviour who came from beyond the Tomb we thank you for restored relationships with our Father in Heaven through Jesus and Him alone for the promise of Eternity in Heaven.

Deliver us from evil by the blessing which Christ alone can bring. May this Christmas make us happy to be thy children again and leave us with grateful thoughts, of forgiving and being forgiven.

As we have considered our own needs of grace and mercy, we also ask, that you hear us as we pray for others this day seeking that their needs be met and that they might know your Blessing through these difficult days.

As we consider a year that has gone by where so much has happened and so much has changed, hear our prayer for those who face the greatest of challenges in these days to come.

Draw near to us and to all who long to hear your Word, all who are lonely and the perplexed; anxious and fearful. Be near to them as you are to us. We pray for the families and communities of which we are a part of and for our Nation - Sustain us

in these times and renew us in these times to come. We give thanks that, in all things, you are with us and we embrace once more the promise of the Saviour Born - Christ the Lord. May the light of Jesus shine in the darkness and bring hope to the world.

Lord, we pray for those who need ongoing medical treatment who are forced to wait at this time, those in Care homes or ill at home - watch over their health and help them to stay positive and patient.

Lord, You understand the pain of loss and the heartache of bereavement, be near to all who grieve at this time for those whose family member or friend has died. Guide us and heal us in our sickness and sorrow. Console us and lead us in times of doubt and confusion, Help us to follow the light of your love and bring to others the Hope of the Gospel. Move our hearts that we might act generously, led to share what we have with those in need.

Lord, in your mercy, Hear our prayer this day for it is in Jesus' name we ask.

Amen.

(Our Prayer today has been adapted from a number of sources including a prayer offered in the name of 14 Church Denominations & Christian Organisations across Scotland & the UK)



John 1: 1 - 18

The Word Became Flesh

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God; ³ all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. ⁴ In him was life,^[a] and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶ There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷ He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸ He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

⁹ The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not.

¹¹ He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. ¹² But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; ¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

*¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. ¹⁵ (John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.'") ¹⁶ **And from his fulness have we all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷ For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸ No one has ever seen God; the only Son,^[b] who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.***

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Good morning everyone,

I trust that Christmas Day has been an enjoyable day for you. I know that it was for Wilma and I, although, I have to say that probably like so many of you the Christmas Day of 2020 was in many ways, a very unusual Christmas. I found it strange because from the Days of my mid-teens onwards, I have always attended the Watchnight Carol service on Christmas Eve. Every year I would look forward to that occasion at North Kelvinside Parish Church in the West End of the city, decades before it has united with Ruchill Parish Church to become the united charge of Ruchill Kelvinside Parish Church now based just off Maryhill Road. Way back then, the congregation was based at the Church site in Queen Margaret Drive across from which there was a pub which on Christmas Eve would see everyone pour out (in some cases literally) from the pub at closing time, last orders being at 11pm to cross the road and come to the Church service at 11.30pm. I have long remembered one occasion before the service where I overheard the minister then remarking to one of his elders that it was a good job we weren't lighting any candles that night as the smell of alcohol in the church would have set the church ablaze.

Fortunately at the time however, we were only one block away from one of the larger Fire Stations in Glasgow in Kelbourne Street so help would have been quickly on hand. I share that story because I think it reminds me of how surreal Christmas Eve 2020 has been as opposed to the previous 46 Christmas Eve services I have led or attended.

I have to say that my saving grace this year has been that of our Sunday School whose marvellous input this year at Christmas has done more for me that I think we had done for them. Their Nativity Presentation in our 4th Sunday of Advent church service and the film night on Christmas Eve ending with the international plan for a jingling of the bells at from churches across the world on Christmas Eve made this time a wee bit more normal and whole lot less surreal. The Comment is a good Segway onto our devotion today

as we think of how the prologue of John's Gospel in Chapter 1 speaks of that moment of Christmas, the point at which Jesus came into the world was the means by which God's Grace not just came into being but also into effect. Verses 16 & 17 sum it all beautifully.

¹⁶ *And from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace.* ¹⁷ *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*”
(John 1: 16 & 17).

In my own quiet time devotions for today as I prepare this devotion it, cites this text and shares the following story which I thought was quite topical because they say that given these days of increased restriction has seen resurgence in the popularity of board games. So I hope this story and the point it raises from the reading John chapter one is one you find helpful and encouraging.

“My family and I really like board games. I have many happy memories of many a Christmas holiday playing board games with my family and friends. At the start, teaching my parents the rules to games took some time. We would go over all the rules one by one, but my parents would sometimes get confused or forget. “Just play the game and we’ll learn,” my dad would say. So as we played, my parents would make many mistakes, but as things went on, they got better and better. A few years ago my mom won 6 games in row while cooking lunch and supper in the kitchen.

The board game rules allowed us to know how to play and to win. Without them, the board game was just random cards, colour tiles, and strange small objects.

For us today, the verses of the Bible are the rules by which we play life's game. God's will is for us to be happy and holy. He gave us these rules for life in His Word, the Bible. It also serves to reveal who God is, how He sent His Son, Jesus, to show us the way and how Jesus came to show us how much joy and peace can be attained through following God's game plan. He showed us the true depth of God's grace and exposed Satan's lies with truth. Jesus shows us how we should play by the rules and win the prize of life everlasting and He offers to help each one of us along that journey today.”

The real gift this Christmas has not been the presents received from family or given by Santa, (as good and lovely as all that might be), or the time with family (as important as that family time may be particularly during these times of stringent restrictions on meeting together in these challenging Covid days). The real gift this Christmas has always been the fullness of God's Love seen in the measure of “Grace upon Grace” and that such Grace along with such truth speaking to our hearts comes **only through Jesus - the Light of**

and for the world. This is what is summed up in the words of John 1: 16 & 17 - the true Gift of Christmas.

I hope everyone enjoys this Christmas time as best we can and that as we look back on this difficult year we truly will have seen the very name of Jesus to have sustained us and remind us that God is with us, always has been and always will be.

In the meantime enjoy these days and we will look forward to seeing you in the New Year at some point soon again I hope.

Calum D. Macdonald

God grant you peace at Christmas
And fill your heart with cheer,
God grant you health and happiness
Throughout the coming year,
God guide you with His wisdom
And keep you in His care —
This is my special wish for you,
This is my Christmas prayer.

Merry Christmas



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