



Giffnock: the Park Church

*Sunday 5th July 2020
Thoughts from Psalm 33*

Good Morning everyone,

I hope you are all well at this time and that your families are likewise. I think Bob Dylan the 1960's songwriter and activist had it right when he penned the words of his song giving it the title, "the Times, they are a' changin'". This is never more true than the times we have been living through. We have never seen such change so fast and so radical and whatever the return to normal may look like in the future we can know for certain that it will not be like the normal of the past. The latest change being that the wearing of masks will now no longer be advisable but compulsory for when you go out to the shops, or use public transport or go to the cinema and perhaps even the pub. I am sure the O.P. will be delighted to be able to open their beer garden to the general public. It will be particularly interesting to see if those wishing to enjoy a drink will be as hardy as those who like a cigarette and be prepared to endure all weathers in the outdoor space to be able to do so. A couple of our Church members, Mrs Elizabeth Hutton and Mrs Gill Bain are willing to make masks for anyone who needs one and if you given them a call (Gill Bain 0141 638 0921 or Elizabeth Hutton 0141 327 7137), We do have small stock of masks available in the church at the moment courtesy of the Nifty Home Sewers, and folk are welcome to avail themselves of these masks should they need to do so. These can be picked up from the Church Office,

Local Parish Churches have now received a 41 page document from the Church of Scotland with guidelines for coming out of Lockdown and as we are halfway through Phase 2 of the Lockdown and anticipating phase 3 beginning in mid July (all being well), we at Park Church have already initiated the process of "the Deep Clean" that is required of us before we can even open for Private prayer. With us being able to do this I do not see us being able to consider opening the church for public worship for some time yet but the good news in this is 'the times are a changin'. Our Reflection this morning is a reminder I hope that we can not only know the blessing of God as individuals but also as a nation and I trust this is something that will speak to our hearts as we continue to endure the restriction while this heath crisis continues to threaten both you and old alike.

As always I trust you will keep well and stay safe through this time and know that the Children's hymn's opening lyrics are words to cheer us and reassure us, that;-

God is always near us, hearing what we say,
Knowing all our work and deeds, All our Work and Play

Best wishes from the manse family

Calum D. Macdonald



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*There is none like You, No one else can touch my heart like You do
I could search for all eternity long, and find There is none like You
(Lenny Leblanc: Hosanna Music)*

Our Father in Heaven Who is there like you, the God of mercy and grace who loves us with a passion we cannot begin to comprehend? We use this time to focus on the marvel of your love once more the offer of your free and unmerited grace and favour through Jesus and we want to thank for all that you mean to us as we celebrate all that you have done for us. Your words tells that you know so much better than ourselves, and perhaps for that we should be even more grateful for the measure of the love that is shown towards by You our Father in Heaven

Who knows and understands our actions as you do?

Who hears the thoughts and words of our heart as you do?

Who knows our joys and sorrows and shares them as you do?

Who feels the pain we endure and comforts us as you do?

Who hears us as we confess our sins and forgives us nevertheless?

Who takes a broken heart and makes it whole as you do?

Who finds a life that's lost and welcomes it home as you do?

Who is there like you, God of mercy and grace who loves us as you do?

In these questions raised and thoughts expressed we thank that they can offer to us a reassurance of the constancy of your love, the intercession on our behalf by Your son and our Lord, the abiding guidance and presence of Your Spirit undertaking for us and sustain us through the challenges that life brings along with the blessing that come our way even in these days.

Who is there like You in all your *Glory*? Father we thank You that we know the answer to that, that there is None like You, There is no-one else who can touch our hearts as You do, that we could search for all eternity long, and find There is none like You - And For that, we thank You and praise you for the constancy of your love, for the reassurance of your *Grace* and for the certain promise of *Eternity* secure.

So Father, as your servant Peter would say, we now affirm, "Thanks Be to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who in his great mercy has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Amen



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Psalm 33: 1 - 22

*¹ Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.*

*² Praise the LORD with the harp;
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.*

*³ Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully, and shout for joy.*

*⁴ For the word of the LORD is right and true;
he is faithful in all he does.*

*⁵ The LORD loves righteousness and justice;
the earth is full of his unfailing love.*

*⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.*

*⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea into jars^[a];
he puts the deep into storehouses.*

*⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD;
let all the people of the world revere him.*

*⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be;
he commanded, and it stood firm.*

*¹⁰ The LORD foils the plans of the nations;
he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.*

*¹¹ But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever,
the purposes of his heart through all generations.*

*¹² Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,
the people he chose for his inheritance.*

*¹³ From heaven the LORD looks down
and sees all mankind;*

*¹⁴ from his dwelling place he watches
all who live on earth—*

*¹⁵ he who forms the hearts of all,
who considers everything they do.*

*¹⁶ No king is saved by the size of his army;
no warrior escapes by his great strength.*

*¹⁷ A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;
despite all its great strength it cannot save.*

*¹⁸ But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,*

*¹⁹ to deliver them from death
and keep them alive in famine.*

*²⁰ We wait in hope for the LORD;
he is our help and our shield.*

*²¹ In him our hearts rejoice,
for we trust in his holy name.*

*²² May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,
even as we put our hope in you.*



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Good morning,

Have you ever had someone look down their nose at you? Have you ever looked down your nose at anyone? The presumptive arrogance of some is that they are better than anyone else. Sometimes that presumptive arrogance manifests itself in the professional life of those in medical fields where they have enjoyed such a success in their own field of surgery or general medicine that they develop what some have referred to as a God complex. Our nation's Politicians and indeed Leaders of nations across the world all at times can be so remote from the reality of things that they begin to believe the hype that they are better than those around them and they look down their nose at the common man or woman on the street. The News media would often accuse those in our Westminster Parliament of living in the Westminster Bubble and perhaps we might think this applies to even those in devolved and local government too living such a life this at times so far removed from that of those round about you. It doesn't matter whether you are a despot in North Korea, a Religious or political leader in the Middle east, or the former Communist world or even the leader of the most powerful nation in the free world who at times seems to exhibit this way of thinking exhibiting all the traits of a God Complex, thinking that there is no-one like themselves. They have forgotten they are human just as the rest of us, that when they bleed their blood is the same colour as yours and mine.

There is classic story told. Once in a small plane there was a doctor, a lawyer, a little boy scout and a parish minister who were out for a Sunday

afternoon flight. Suddenly, the plane developed engine trouble. In spite of the best efforts of the pilot, the plane started to go down. The pilot grabbed a parachute, yelling to the passengers that they had better get a parachute and jump, then he bailed out. Unfortunately there were only three parachutes remaining. The doctor grabbed one and said "I'm a doctor, I save lives, so I must live," and jumped out. The lawyer then said "I'm the smartest man in the world, I deserve to live!" He grabbed a parachute and jumped out as well. The Minister looked at the little boy scout and said, "Son, I've lived a long and full life. You are young and have your whole life ahead of you. Take the last parachute and live in peace." The boy scout handed the parachute back to the minister and said "Don't worry, Preacher. 'The smartest man in the world' just jumped with my rucksack."

The point of the Story is to remind ourselves that Haughty Pride comes before a fall (no pun intended). That these words from the book of Proverbs way back then have an application to everyone now, the great and the not so great, the good and the not so good. That it is important to remember what has been spoken of elsewhere in the book of Proverbs in previous reflections about "the fear of the Lord being the beginning of Wisdom". Perhaps presidents should not so much stand outside a church waving a bible about but go in to the Church and read the said Bible for themselves and see their life through the eyes of God Almighty. I say that not just for the benefit of presidents but also for prime ministers as well as the leaders of opposition, of communist heads of state as well as the leaders of the Democratic nations across the world. I say that for those who are at the top of their game who think they are untouchable. I say that to those who are at the bottom of the pile, proverbially speaking, perhaps blighted by Addiction or who have no sense of Hope for the future or God's love for them in the present, or even anyone's love for them for that matter.

Psalm 33 is a psalm which I think applies to individuals but also to nations. The author of the Psalm is unknown, but the wisdom of his words is worth taking in. I have systematically broken things down to help us understand this better. (I hope)

- a) It is a hymn of praise in its beginning and its end
(verse 1 -3 & vs 20 -22)
- b) It affirms God's Word as True (Vs 4- 7)
- c) It reminds us that as nations and as individual people we should Hold even the very Name of God as something to be Revered, respected and even feared. (vs 8- 11)

- d) It warns us all of every nation that God is Sovereign, (Vs 12)
- e) He Sees all and knows all (Vs 14& 15)
- f) No-one not even a nation's leader is exempt. (16 & 17)
- g) In the penultimate section of the Psalm it reminds us where our Hope and patience ultimately should rest (Vs 18 & 19)
- h) The final Section finishes as the Psalm began with an Ascription of Praise and Thanks To God

I don't often offer an 8 points sermon but If I were this would be the approach I would take to read Psalm 33. And in applying these things to my daily life as Christian, to extol My Praise and thanks of God always for what He has done and continues to do in my life and the lives of everyone else. Psalm 33 once again affirms the central place of His word. Ministers when taking vows ordination acknowledge that God's word applies to life and doctrine.

Perhaps in these words of psalm 33 we can hear the Saviour echoing something similar when he spoke in the sermon on the mount of the danger of looking down on others, "seeing the speck in their eye all the while missing the plank of wood sitting in our own" (Matt 7 : 3- 5)

In these days I have been shocked and appalled at times at political statements made that have no compassion for human need at times. What comes across is such a presumptive arrogance failing to see their own short comings, short comings that God Almighty himself sees more clearly than we do as we prayed about in the prayer of this reflection.

May God in his Goodness and Grace teach us to never look down on others but see them with the compassionate eyes of the Saviour and follow his example in the treatment of those who need his touch in their lives the most those who are near to us and those whom we have never met before.

A BLESSING

—Numbers 6:24-26—

“May THE LORD BLESS you
and PROTECT you.

May THE LORD *smile on you*
and BE GRACIOUS to you.

May THE LORD *show you*
HIS FAVOR and
give you HIS PEACE.”