

Let the children come to Me



For to such belongs
the Kingdom of God

*Giffnock:
the
Park Church
Sunday 21st
June 2020*

*This Morning's Father's Day Reflection is :
A Father's Love*

Good Morning everyone,

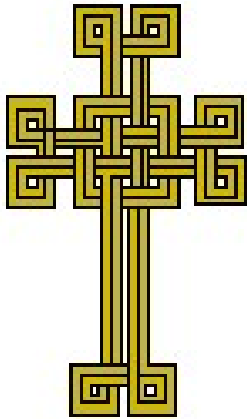
I trust everyone is keeping well and that despite the circumstances of the day that we are enjoying the glorious weather. Today of course is Father's day and like Mother's Day it has been swallowed up by the pandemic Crisis Restrictions and limited movement is the order of the day although the good news is that we are gradually moving forward to a point where some sort of normal life can once again begin again. We can meet more of our families and can even let someone in the House now. I know there was some national disappointment that pubs are not to open yet and many father's looking forward to that first pint have to deal with this setback. It may be that they can still enjoy Father's Day because, like me, they will have the opportunity to enjoy an Irn-Bru, Scotland's other national Drink instead.

Our Focus this morning will look again at our Father's love at this time as we look again at how and why we might want to give Him our Thanks and praise for his enduring love, his sustaining power and his ever faithful promises to us. I want to recommend a book to you if you are stuck for something to read. It is by a man called Floyd McClung and the book is titled 'the Father Heart of God', where he explores our understanding of God's Great love as a Father in the light of comparison with the love that Fathers have or don't have for their children in human terms and I hope you enjoy it.

The Good news at the moment is the restrictions on people entering a church for contemplation and prayer has been relaxed. As many of you know there have been a group of local volunteers hard at work seeking to offer hand-made PPE for Hospitals, health & social Care professionals and Nursing Homes all around the Glasgow area and beyond. They are drawing their time with us to a close and have offered to do a deep clean of the Halls and Church and it is with that being done that my hope is that Church will be able to be reopened on Sunday mornings for anyone who wants to come in and spend time in the quietness of the moment before God, all the while observing a social distance protocol obviously. It's a small step forward but I think an important one.

In the meantime, let me say on behalf of Wilma, Stephen and myself, have a great week.

Calum D. Macdonald



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⁶ But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. (Matthew 6: 6)

A Prayer of Thanks for a Father's Love

Father in Heaven this day we thank you for the ways in which we can thank you. We can marvel at the Power you hold in your hand, a power that brings creation into being, a power that is immeasurably more than we could imagine, a Power that seeks to save us from ourselves. We stand in awe of your Mercy and Grace, so freely offered to any and all who will turn to the Saviour in Faith and trust. We stand amazed at the willingness of Jesus, your son to leave the glory of heaven and come to the humble life of a Carpenter's son and become the World's Redeemer. We Thank You for the driving force behind all that being the Love of a Father for a broken world and his son's willingness to take the burden of Sin upon his shoulders so that He who had no sin might become the sin of the World. As we celebrate the love that Father's have had for their children across the world today we thank you once more for your great love for us.

Forgive us Loving Father for those moments when our commitment to you is half hearted at times. Forgive us for our lack of prayer, our lack of hope, our lack of trust at times. Forgive us

for the ways we have spoken with and of others at times for the bad mindsets we have at times and for the actions we should not have entered into or the deeds we should have done but haven't.

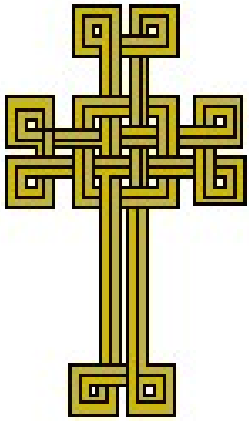
We seek your Grace upon us, which we recognise is undeserved and unmerited. In doing so we take heart in the words of the Apostle Paul who was able to declare "Thanks Be to God who gives us the Victory in Jesus." We thank You for his intercession on our behalf and for forgiveness through it.

As Jesus intercedes for us, we follow his example seeking to bring before You our family and friends who need you at this time, for all who have to heed the call of the Gospel to turn in Faith to Jesus. We pray for all those whose health is impacted by all that is happening at this time, Covid19 related or otherwise, those receiving treatment, those awaiting surgery, those on ever extended waiting lists and their families that watch on anxiously. We dare to seek your healing touch on all those who are young or old or in between. We pray for the fears and worries of those who look ahead with uncertainty in terms of Job prospects and provision of their families.

We seek Your Re-assurance towards them Gracious God and pray that things might truly settle down and the chaos of all this subside. We pray for all those in political office today, may they recognise that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" and ensure that there is an integrity to decision made and the courage to do what is right for those they constituently represent.

Once more we lift your Church in all its fullness and variety of worship and understanding. May we all as members of your Church seek to do the Right and be faithful to Your Call upon our lives that we may always remember, "Whose we are and Whom we serve" in Jesus' name we pray.

Amen



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Our Bible Reading today is a well known Parable Luke 15:

The Parable of the Lost Son

¹¹ Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “**When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: **Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.** ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.**

“But while he was still a long way off, **his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.**

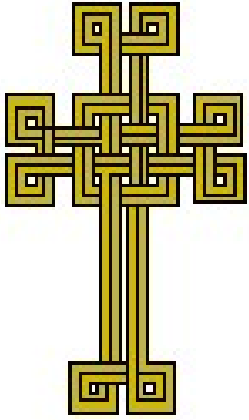
²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ **For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.**’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “**The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him.** ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”



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Today is of course Father's Day and all around the country, there will be celebrations of one kind or another where families perhaps across several generations will celebrate A Father's Love for their children. There will be some who look cynically on because they have never had that kind of relationship with their father and in some cases may never have really known their father either through the tragedy of untimely death or because an absentee Father walked away from it all leaving them and their mother and therefore they do not feel any need to celebrate such a thing. In one sense who can blame them? In my time as Probationer all those years ago, I remember the minister there talking about the tension that existed between a church member there and him. They just could not hit it off. No matter what he tried it just didn't work. He described that situation as "an unfulfilled relationship which remained broken" I will come back to this thought Shortly.

Let me share with you two other brief stories that highlight the nature of a Father's love and our longing for it. The first story is one about the American actor and comedian Billy Crystal.

Billy Crystal was in New York filming when his daughter Lindsay turned 11. He phoned home to wish her a happy birthday and to apologize for not being there. Then he said, "I've sent a large package that will arrive late this afternoon." Then he jumped on a non-stop flight to Los Angeles and later, when Lindsay got home from school, the doorbell rang and when she opened the door she saw a large, six-foot box. When she opened it, her Dad was inside. Crystal said, "She hugged me so long I didn't think she'd ever let go!" Then he added, "I've missed 35 birthdays with my Dad. I'm not gonna let that happen with my daughter." Billy Crystal was 15 years-old when his Dad died of a heart attack.

The second story is about a wee boy whose Father walked out on the family leaving his wife, son & Daughter when they were young. The wife did her utmost to maintain the relationship with the children and their father and although it was at times strained and never as frequent as they hoped it would be, there was one of these occasions where the Father had visited and other friends were there. The son was in the back garden playing football with his dad and others there. The young lad kept on referring to all round, very loudly, for all to hear about how he was playing football with his dad and one could see in that moment that unfulfilled longing he had to be with his Father. No doubts that may be the cry of many today.

The Story of the Prodigal Sons is one that is well known to so many of us from Sunday school days or from sermons heard across the years from the pulpit. The Parable is of course not just about the wayward son who sought to squander his inheritance on wine, women and song but also that of the son who was jealous and resentful and couldn't look past that when his brother returned. It's the story of two sons in contrast to one another but more critically, it's about a Father's Love behind the scenes of it all, who

could look beyond what the younger son had done, who could look beyond the jealousy and rage of his other son and love them both unconditionally. Jesus being the master story teller he was speaks of how The Father ran towards his son when he saw him in the distance. He didn't stand at the gate with his arms folded and his foot tapping and ask the question, "What have you got to say for yourself?" which might in human terms have been perfectly appropriate. But the Father's love looked beyond all that. The image of Billy Crystal going to extreme lengths for his child is a lovely one but I also think it mirrors the idea of God's Fatherly concern for his Children - for all his children in every corner of the world. Like the Father and his wayward son, Our Father in Heaven sought to save that which was lost but now is found all because of Jesus his only son.

Like the wee boy in our second story I believe there are a great many people today who long for a relationship with their Father in heaven but whose relationship to date has remained unfulfilled and that there are those who need to discover or to rediscover what Floyd McClung referred to as the Father Heart of God. Stuart Townend in one of his Hymns summed things up beautifully,

*"How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure"*

There are many who have never fully known a Father's love. There are so many today where the relationship between Father and Child is broken and there is a longing for both father and son to move past the things that keep them apart but who have never been able to do so. The chasm that once kept us from knowing our Father in Heaven has been bridged by Jesus and now as a consequence our Father in Heaven can run to us for once we were lost but now we are found.

We have every reason to Celebrate Father's Day today not just because we want to acknowledge our birth Father's love for us or our children wanting to acknowledge their love for us in recognising our love for them. For me the greater story in all of this is seeing yet again the Father Heart of God's Love and how we can best respond to it today in Faith, in worship, in service and in every aspect of living a life that brings glory to our Father in Heaven. I hope you have a great Week and as always I hope you stay safe in these times of heightened health awareness.

Calum D. Macdonald

oOo



I will make the Lord My Music

I will make his love the Key

Which tunes my heart to Him

And gives Life its Harmony

So May I know his Blessing

As each Day unfolds

May I see Your Hand at Work

In each story that is told

May I fill my life with Love

That others may See

The Richest, Greatest Blessing

From the One who is in Three

