



*Giffnock:
Park Church*

*Sunday
10th May*

2020

*²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart
and my portion for ever. (Psalm 73:26)*

Good morning everyone,

another week has passed and I have once again put together another Lockdown Reflection. As we push past the 6 week marker of this of time of isolation and social distancing we have seen that this past week has been a historic one where time was taken to remember another occasion where the UK had its back to the wall and came through it. The 75th anniversary of VE Day on 8th May 1945, marking the end of hostilities in Europe, saw the elation of young and old alike as they realised that the War in Europe at least, was over and the nation could rejoice. Newsreel footage shows the celebrations in Trafalgar Square and elsewhere across the UK, with Street parties all over the place and social distancing, well that wasn't even a concept or concern - quite the opposite. We may not see such an occasion here in the UK for quite some time because our enemy today is not human. It is a deadly disease, invisible to the eye and transmittable by touch. I don't think things will be the same for quite some time yet and changes and adaptation with social distance may be the order of the day and even the new norm.

One observation of the people then was their stoic nature. Much has been said today how we should be like them and take courage holding fast to the resolve that we see this awful time through hopefully with our loved ones and families unaffected and as few casualties of this disease as possible. I believe this is a time when we will need God's strength now more than ever both corporately and individually and I trust as you read this reflection that you will find in God one who you can lean upon and draw strength from. Stay safe as always and healthy knowing His ever abiding presence and strength.

Yours sincerely

Calum D. Macdonald



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*¹¹ The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.
Psalm 29:11*

Let us Pray

Our Loving God and Father we come to you at this time to thank you once again for sustaining us through these difficult days. Your Word describes you as the great healer and as such there are so many who will need to avail themselves of your healing power today. Your Word describes you as the One who provides and we would pray that we would see the day come when those working at the frontline of this disease have all they need in terms of protective equipment and a capacity to resolve the health care needs of our nation and its people. Your Word describes You as El Elyon, the one who is Most High, whose sovereignty and supremacy and strength is like no other and so we would pray for strength to rise above the challenge of all that we face, even the very door of death itself which you have conquered through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We confess that sometimes the cares of this day seem to multiply and overcome us and your blessing seems to us to fade so quickly. In these darker moments help us to see the light of your love shining through to us so that even when we may see our bodies become more tired and exhaustion overcomes our minds, that we fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith that we might draw on His strength and his resolve to carry us through the day

Refresh us by your Spirit, empower us, enable us, Commission us afresh to the Call of Faith that you have given to each one that we might Act Justly, love mercy and walk humbly at your side.

As we look at the week ahead, help us to see your hand at work in the lives that are saved and in the situations that are changed. Be near to those who mourn at this time. Bring your healing power to those who are ill this day. Sustain those who are struggling with all that has been happening during this time of crisis. Guide those in leadership for the nation and our community, give them courage of conviction to do what is right and not expedient or just profitable to them. May we see that this time revives people's awareness of the fragility of life but also awakens the opportunity of knowing Our Father's love and Grace and mercy. We pray this in and through Jesus name.

Amen

STANDING
ON THE
PROMISES OF GOD'S
STRENGTH



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Philippians 4: 10 - 20

Thanks for their gifts

¹⁰ I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ *I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵ Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.



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Reflecting on God's Promise

Strength for each new Day and Strength for each new Situation

I hope you have been able to enjoy the lovely weather despite the restrictions of the day in terms of being able to be out and about. I have continued to think about the ways in which we can see the promise of God in the story of our current times. And thus far we have been able to consider the promise of God in the Rainbow, his promise to deliver us through troubled times and to honour us as we honour him. Today I would want us to consider God's promise of strength for the day.

It is hard to believe that I have been serving in Parish Ministry for some 28 yrs or so. In all that time I have found one train of thought to be consistent in the lives of so many I have had a pastoral role with - particularly when an individual or family were going through a difficult time or experience. Very often when confronted with a death in the family, often it's a sudden death, perhaps of a child, a teenager or a consequence of being a casualty of conflict or industrial accident; sometimes it may be a situation of mental health or physical illness. They all say the same thing... "I don't know how I'm going to get through this." Interestingly though, very often on the other side of that time of crisis, they would remark, "I don't know how I managed to get through that." I suspect that my experience as a minister is not unique, that many other ministers would simply reply "Yep! That's my experience too" Time and time again I have seen how people come through difficult situations and a combination of circumstance and conversations with people all happening at just the right time.

I'd like to share a true story with you about a minister who made a house call on a hunch. His Church Officer and his wife had been going through

hard times. While they had been long standing members of the church, they were also embroiled in a long standing Feud in the church, the tensions of which were rising to the fore, his wife was grieving for her father who was the former church officer but had died after a long period of illness, the church officer's mother had died after a short battle with cancer and he too was grieving. It seemed their lives were imploding, and they were in a downward spiral of despair and sought to drown their sorrows in alcohol and isolate themselves from all in the church. The minister had been visiting them both trying to be the encouragement he could be, all the while increasingly concerned about a situation deteriorating before his eyes.

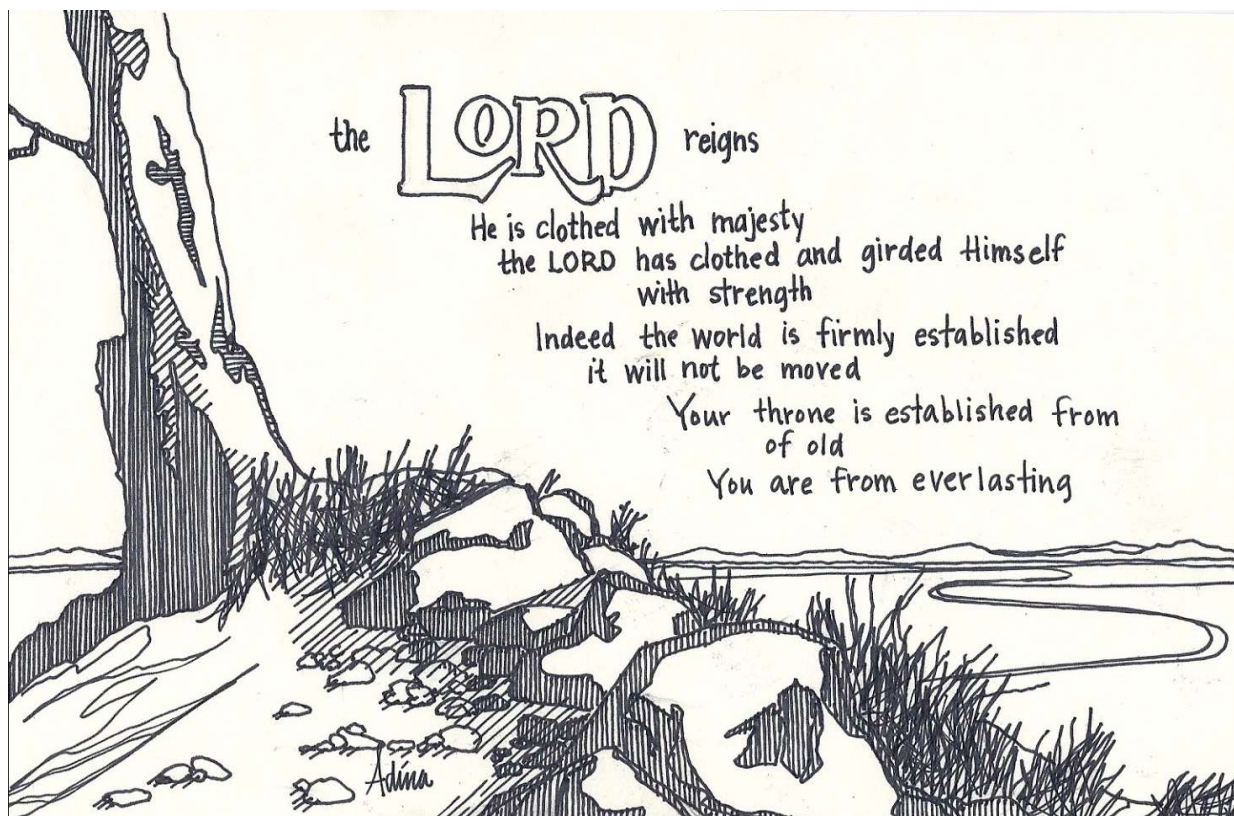
One winter's night around 9pm the minister heading home from the church in the pouring rain and wind and cold stopped the car outside the church officer's door and rang the door bell. Moments before, the church officer's wife had raised her eyes to the ceiling and cried " God Help me !" Within seconds of that happening the door bell rang and the minister was there standing before them. The conversation that evening and the prayer that was raised to God then was a transformational moment for them both and they literally turned their lives around and from that moment things changed, they went from strength to strength.

Sometimes the source of the strength we need for situations is unseen but is there nevertheless. The poem of the Footprints in the Sand echoes that where God carries us through a situation even though we might not know he was there at the time. There are other occasions though when God reveals the means of his strength with that divine opportunity or appointment where the coincidence of time and interaction with others becomes the means by which people are sustained through the worst of times.

Paul the apostle understood this, when he wrote to the church in Philippi of how he could be content in every situation good or bad because he knew to the deepest part of him that God would strengthen Him and keep Him and guard over him. That same promise of Philippians 4: 13 is there for each one of us and we should take heart that God can do immeasurably more than we possibly imagine and his timing is perfect. I hope you are not going through the worst of times but if you are then please be assured with the words of the Psalmist today, "*God is the strength of Your heart and Your portion for ever. (Psalm 73:26)*

Have a good week

Calum D. Macdonald



A Prayer of St Augustine

*Breathe in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my thoughts may all be holy.*

*Act in me, O Holy Spirit,
that my work, too, may be holy.*

*Draw my heart, O Holy Spirit,
that I love but what is holy.*

*Strengthen me, O Holy Spirit,
to defend all that is holy.*

*Guard me, then, O Holy Spirit,
that I always may be holy.*

Amen.