



*Giffnock: the Park Church*  
*Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2020*



I am not afraid of  
tomorrow because  
I know that  
**GOD**  
is already there!

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*Not because of who I am  
But because of what You've done  
Not because of what I've done  
But because of who You are*

Good morning everyone,  
Welcome to Day Two of the Tier 4 Lockdown. A fairly modern hymn will be played by our Organist in the Service of Reflection and Prayer today, the words of which are based on Psalm 42. I was reading the psalm and came across a question the Psalmist asks of himself but also sees the answer having asked it.

*Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?  
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.*  
(Psalm 42: 5)

One of the Things that we are hearing in our newsfeeds and reading in our newspapers is the rising concern over the mental health of the nation. For the Christian reading psalm 42 that question becomes very much alive in the context of our current times. The marvellous thing is that while everyone else is asking the question, God's Words hints strongly at an answer for us, "**Put your hope in God,**". None of us have been looking forward to this time of a more stringent lockdown and many of my colleagues and their congregations have elected to cease their services for the time being. For me Verse 5 of Psalm 42 is an important thought for us to take on Board, that we put our Hope in God and Praise Him. The period of Lockdown will be for three Sundays only and I feel it is easier to continue than to stop and to start again.

It will require patience on the part of those who love to come to church because our numbers for attendance are more restricted, Tier 3 allowed 50 adults and/or children, Tier 4 only allows 20 children or adults. This all requires us to be fair to those who would wish to come to church but who

couldn't manage this Sunday because all the spaces were taken. Those who missed out today will automatically be given "first Dibbs" on attending our Service on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November and if we have a Tier 4 full house again, we will repeat that offer to those who wish to come to the Service on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December.

Hopefully by the 13<sup>th</sup> December we will have been downgraded back to Tier 3 allowing more of us to attend the service. In the meantime I hope we will all come through this time, Trusting that God will sustain us and keep us and that we will indeed be able to one day Praise Him in his House once again ... sooner rather than later.

Wishing "aw'ra" best and good health  
Calum D. Macdonald



*"The greatest tragedy of life is not  
unanswered prayer, but unoffered prayer."*

*F.B. Meyer*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

*Rejoice always, **pray continually**, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is  
God's will for you in Christ Jesus.*

Let us Pray,

Heavenly Father as we come before You once more at the end of one week and the beginning of another that is new and uncertain, we come into your Presence to once again acknowledge your sovereign Power and Love. The Call of your Word is to trust in You. As the maker of the heavens and the earth, the one who is eternal, all seeing and all knowing, we come to You once more reflecting again on the marvel of your love towards us and the gift of your Son to us.

Lord God Almighty, we know you have a plan for our lives, but with all that is going on around us right now, we struggle at times to be able to see it. The path ahead seems dark and unknown and we confess there have been times that have just tried to do our own thing, in our own way, often leaving us unclear and uncertain about what to do next. Your Word tells us that we should Put our Trust in You, our Father in heaven. It tells us that we should not only trust in you but also the plans you have for us, even though we don't understand or see them. So in these moments of Prayer, our time before you is one where we seek that You lead us and guide us in these days to come that we might once again see how you truly are wise and all-knowing and can do all things.

Forgive us Loving God for not being willing or able to follow the example of our Lord Jesus, forgive us when we have conveniently forgotten all that he achieved on the cross of Calvary and in the empty tomb. Forgive our ambivalence and lack of faith at times and may your forgiveness bear upon us with such a sense of reassurance that we can see the Hand of your Holy Spirit working in us and at times through us to reach others in Christ's name.

May we truly reflect the greatness of your love for our broken and fallen world.

Father in Heaven, we would pray for all in your Church again. We seek that you uphold them and keep them in these times of fear of ill health and uncertain futures.

- Be with those who have lost loved ones this day and who grieve for them.
- Be near to those whose livelihoods are under threat, give them reassurance at this time.
- Draw near to those who are homeless with nowhere to go and no-one to turn to.
- Be with those who are our health and Social Care providers, our Teachers and Police officers, keep all of them safe at this time.
- Be with those who have the heavy burden of Governance of the nation and nations. We pray that Integrity, Honesty and the need to do what's right might return to the heart of our political establishments and that they govern with a sense of conscience and propriety that serves the nation and not just themselves.
- Be with those distant lands where your church is at odds with the state or other faiths and keep our brothers and sisters from persecution we pray.

Loving Heavenly Father, You have loved us with an immeasurable love. We pray that love would strengthen our souls with that love that is wider than we can understand, that is deeper than we could ever imagine, and greater than we could ever know. As You encourage us and give us a boldness to believe, may we serve you better in these days to come, may we offer to others a fitting witness of Faith in your Son Jesus and may we know the blessing of your ever abiding presence now and always. Amen.

# Colossians 1: 3 - 20



*God's Word,  
Learn it, Obey it,  
be saved by it*

## **Colossians 1: 3 - 20** **(New International Version)**

### ***Thanksgiving and Prayer***

<sup>3</sup> We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, <sup>4</sup> because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people— <sup>5</sup> the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel <sup>6</sup> that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.

<sup>7</sup> You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, <sup>8</sup> and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

<sup>9</sup> For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, <sup>10</sup> so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, <sup>12</sup> and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light. <sup>13</sup> For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, <sup>14</sup> in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

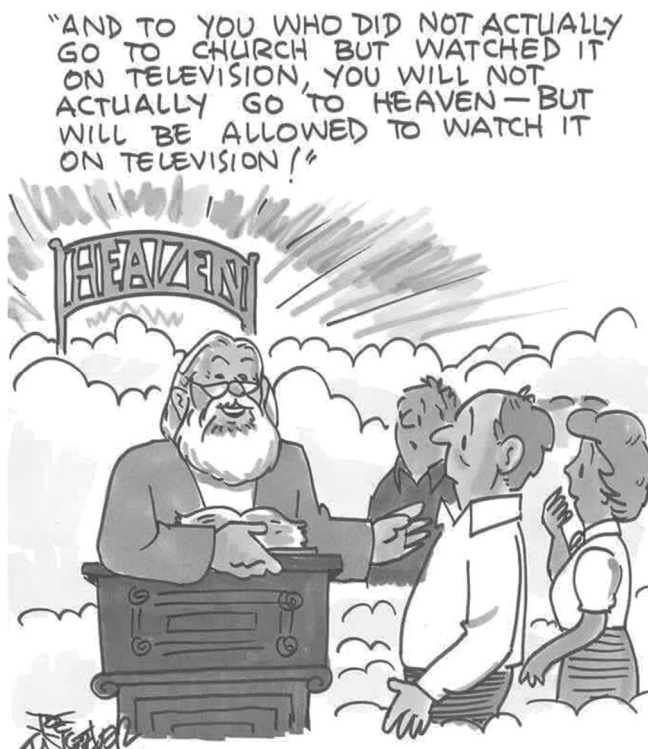
### ***The Supremacy of the Son of God***

<sup>15</sup> The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.

<sup>16</sup> For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is

*the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup> For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

—oOo—



"According to my records, you never went to church and hardly ever watched 'Songs of Praise'."





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Good morning

I am sure this week will feel somewhat uncertain as we enter yet another more intense period of Lockdown which I am sure we all hope will be as short as it is intended to be. I know that a number of my colleagues and the congregations in which they serve have elected to close down for the period of time that we remain in Tier 4. This week I have been reading Psalm 42 of which the modern hymn, 'As the deer pants for the water' is written and found in Mission Praise as well as many other hymn books. In the text of the Psalm there is both a question asked but also an answer given which I think goes to the heart of things at the moment.

*Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me?*

*Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God. (Ps42:5)*

With all that we have been through these past 8 months I can understand how easy it might be to become despondent at this particular time and I hope that these words that follow might help to reassure and affirm us once more in our faith. You will see from our reading this morning that I have selected part of a letter written by the Apostle Paul for the benefit of the early church. It might be helpful for us to know a wee bit about the background of Paul's letter and I hope what follows does just that. I came across a paper written by a Church of England vicar, part of which I have used in our devotional today. I'll leave you to guess which bit is his and which is mine.

Colossae was originally an ancient city known as Phrygia located in that part of Asia Minor known as Anatolia which is part of modern Day Turkey today. Two thousand years ago, it was a prosperous part of the Roman Empire lying only a few miles off a major trade route linking Paul's home city of Tarsus to Ephesus, the capital of Asia Minor. Though only a small town in Paul's time, it had long been known for its fine wool, and its busy streets where Greeks and Jews mixed with

merchants from all over the empire. Living in Colossae you came to hear all sorts of new and fascinating ideas.

Colossae had been a fellowship founded through the preaching of the Apostle Paul and as with some of his other letters, he writes with a fatherly concern for all who had responded to the call of the gospel. Sometimes what we read in Scripture seems to come from a very different world.

By contrast, the world of the Colossian Christians sounds very familiar: multinational businesses, excellent communications, frequent long-distance travel, a broad interest in spirituality. The first century Roman Empire is an exciting time and place to be alive. One could worship the emperor, the mother-goddess Cybele, the many-breasted Artemis and the terrible Zeus all in the same week! Even Judaism, while strict and exclusive in Jerusalem would relax a wee bit as it leaves home soil and begins to mix, discreetly, with other spiritualities.

If there was a branch of Waterstones at Colossae, the Colossians would have been able to browse a whole range of religious books on the traditional religions, but also on the subject of angels, spirits, philosophies, exercises, diets, prophets, horoscopes, numerology, moon rituals, witchcraft, revelations and prophecies.

Paul was genuinely concerned that the Colossian Christians may have been falling for some of these teachings and that this threatened to compromise their Christian faith. This was a constant struggle for Paul as he endeavoured to keep these fledgling fellowships in Galatia, Colossae, Corinth and elsewhere on the straight and narrow. There are times when his frustration can be seen to rise. Many of these worldviews sound impressive, but they are not Christianity.

At best, these Pseudo-Christian perspectives are weak imitations, offering a mere shadow of Christ and Paul was keen to convey this message to the Colossians especially. There are those today both within the Church and external to the church who threaten the core understanding that people have of Jesus of Nazareth. The Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber musical Jesus Christ Superstar chips away at this when the song "I don't know how to love him" sung by the character of Mary Magdalene declares Jesus to be "Just a man" or "He's just one more" What a heresy lessening everything about who Jesus is. He is not as some would argue a great teacher or prophet, he is God's Son and that we should affirm that wholeheartedly.

An old Minister I served with as Student during my training for Ministry used to always say that his role was to help others know what they believe about Jesus and why they believe in the first place. Paul is mad keen to get the early church on board with this so they are not deceived or drawn into other things, that they should be able to take the initiative and think for themselves and not listen to people who tell you there is something wrong with you unless you do things their way; that you should not believe teachers who say anything or anyone is more



important than Christ. Rather we should learn all we can for ourselves about this person of Jesus; who he is, what He did and who his Father was.

The Letter to the Colossians was therefore written to tell the Christian community to hold on to what they had learned and believed about Christ in the face of false teaching and that only then would they know true wisdom.

To Help us with that, we need to look at Colossians 1: 3 - 20 this morning as a game of two halves and that we should take the Second half first for reasons which I hope will be obvious. Paul in the verses of his opening letter to the Colossian Church seeks to affirm the Centrality of belief in Jesus for Salvation and in his Divinity and that this has an impact for Christian Living and faith for the Believer. In addressing his Divinity, he writes, "<sup>15</sup> *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.* <sup>16</sup> *For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him.* <sup>17</sup> *He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.* (Col 1: 15 - 17) What other conclusion can be drawn from this? Paul writes with a certainty of belief in Jesus being the Very Son of God himself. He is left in no doubt of this and feels that those who read this letter should feel similarly. He secondly writes about Jesus role in relation to the Church and again he is clear about the Divine nature of Christ's appointment as the Head of the Church. This resonates very strongly with our Reformation background where it is proclaimed every year at the General Assembly of our National Church, in every Parish Church Communion, every Service of Ordination of an Elder or Minister alike and every new church member declaring their faith publicly for the first time by profession of faith," *He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. (Col 1: 18-20)* Not only is Jesus' Divinity affirmed here but his authority as well; an authority that we are all subject to, whether we like it or not.

If the Second half is about affirming who Jesus is in relation to God Almighty, the first half is about our response to that and Paul wants those in the early church to be able to always respond appropriately and not be led astray by an abhorrent thought process or practice. We could spend several weeks looking at this chapter alone with the depth of material that Paul's writing offers on the

subjects Prayer, faith, Reflecting God's Love, Hope, bearing Witness, understanding the work of the Spirit of God and Living a life worthy of God.

I confess that when writing these devotionals my head becomes filled with the lyrics of songs that strike a chord for me and today has been no different. There is a song written by a man called Mark Hall and performed by a Gospel Band called Casting Crowns and some of the words struck a chord with Colossians 1 this morning.

*Not because of who I am, but because of what You've done*

*Not because of what I've done, but because of who You are*

In reading Colossians 1: 6 - 13 for our devotional today, "*that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way*" (**Verse 10**) could and should be our focus and that there are a number of things Paul draws out for us to look at.

Seeking to live a life Worthy of our Lord requires us to :

*bear fruit in every good work.*

Verse 5 highlights for us how Faith and Love interacts with its impact being not just on ourselves but on others. Are we seen as people who honour God in the things we say and do? Or are we just like everyone else? Paul thought the world of this Colossian Fellowship and he was concerned that they never lose that special sense of God's call upon them, their Faith in Him and their love for one another.

*"we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—<sup>5</sup> the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel"* (**Col 1 : 4 – 6**)

There are two aspects here, the centrality of Faith for the Believer, and Love for one's fellow believer and also unbelievers.

It is vitally important that we let others see God's love for them motivated by our Actions on Christ's behalf. There has been a long standing tension between the role of good works in relation to faith in Scottish theology and understanding stemming from the earliest of reformation thinking. I have always felt this is best understood by seeing faith as the means by which our own Salvation is assured and our works are the means by which we demonstrate our faithfulness to God to others which might help them come to that place of Faith in Christ in their own terms and in their own time. It doesn't impact our salvation, per say, but it could/should impact the salvation of others. For that to happen there is a requirement that we be faithful in what we do and that we let others see the love we, and God through us, have for them.

Seeking to live a life Worthy of our Lord requires us to :

Grow in the knowledge of God ( Verse 10)

This of course does not require us all to become professors in theology but it does demand that we become mature in our faith and understanding of God's love for us and his love for others, a love that we should see becoming apparent in ourselves towards others. It doesn't mean that as mature Christians we have all the answers, it means rather that we have an approach that is Christ Like which is something We all might find easy to speak of but not so easy to live up to.

Seeking to live a life Worthy of our Lord requires us to :

See the strength of God within ourselves that we might have Patience & Endurance

These words from Verse 11 speak of this that we might be reminded, challenged and encouraged that Christian faith does not immunise us against pain and suffering but it does strengthen us and give that endurance and patience that sustains us through it all. Forgive the immunisation metaphor but this is perhaps one of the most pertinent parts of the text for life today given all that we are going through as we look to see Covid-19 disappear or be cured. God's immeasurable love can strengthen our souls with a love that is wider than we can understand, deeper than we could ever imagine, and greater than we could ever know. This can encourage us to stay the course till we see better days to come all the while offering a fitting witness of Faith in Jesus and living a worthy of our Lord.

Seeking to live a life Worthy of our Lord requires us to :

Give thanks in every circumstance - both the bad and the Good

*“giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people” (Col 1:12)*

This final section reminds us that we can be thankful in any and all circumstance. Paul writes from real experience here and shares this kernel with this fledgling congregation about the link between praise, worship and thankfulness and that of pain and suffering. When those around us are looking in despair at all that is happening all around, yet seeing Christians giving thanks. They will either think you are mad or what so often happens, they think there may be something in this. People are not daft, they can work out the fake from the real. Paul wanted those in the early church then to show that discernment, we should want to be able to show that discernment as well - knowing What we believe and why we believe it. That it truly is:-

*Not because of who I am, But because of what He has done*

*Not because of what I've done, But because of who He is*

Have a great week even if it is a week in Lockdown

With best wishes

Calum



*May the peace of God  
enfold us,  
The love of God uphold us,  
The wisdom of God control us.  
May the Grace,  
Mercy and Peace of God,  
the Father, son and Holy  
Spirit remain with each one  
Now and always  
Amen*