



Giffnock: the Park Church
Sunday 1st October 2020



A Warm Welcome
to our Time for Reflection

Good morning,

As I look out my study window this morning, it is gloriously sunny. I can tell that there have been rain showers, seeing the glint of dampness on the grass and that the Road is clearly still wet. When I was serving as a Parish Minister in Saltcoats we could go down to the Beach and you could look across the Clyde estuary and see the Hills of Arran dominated by Goatfell, sometimes with a cap of snow, depending on the time of year obviously. In Saltcoats, they used to say that when looking at the hills of Arran, that if you can see the Hills then it is going to rain and that if you can't see the hills then it's raining.

When I was still at University we used to Holiday in the summer in and around St Andrews when the boys were young and we discovered that it has a bizarre weather phenomenon. Quite often the Residents will see the haar (Fog) coming towards them off the North Sea and it will split into two one going north to Dundee and the other south to Edinburgh and Leith while St Andrews would continue to be bathed in Sunshine. (Apparently that was one of the reasons that Royal Air Force sited an airbase there, knowing they would be permanently free of fog.)

Why am I saying all this? Well, it is partly because in thinking about these things I am reminded of the story of Jesus chiding the Pharisees for looking for a sign from Jesus to prove who He was.

Matthew 16: 2 -4 & 12

“16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.² He replied, ‘When evening comes, you say, “It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,”³ and in the morning, “Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.” You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.^[a]⁴ A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.’ Jesus then left them and went away.

¹² *Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*

While Jesus told the Pharisees off then and used it as a teaching moment for the disciples, many years later the apostle Paul would counsel those in the early church to develop a sense of discernment and even defined it as one of the Gifts of the Spirit.

With last week having been very changeable in not just the weather, we need to be able to look and recognise these signs of change again. The world of politics is in turmoil, economies across the world are struggling to cope, nations are breaking out in hostility and disease led by the rampant Covid-19 bug remains relatively unchecked and continues to foster chaos and grief.

At the moment with all this going on, It has been good that we have been able to meet in church again albeit still under considerable restriction and while the opportunity of attendance at church on a Sunday morning has not been affected, with the rising concerns about the spread of Covid-19 and now the flu, that could still change. Ever the optimist I hope for the best and prepare for whatever might come in the meantime as best I can and I hope you are able to be like that too.

In the meantime like the man at the beach in Saltcoats watching for the rain clouds over Arran, we watch and see what is to happen next and with all of this "stuff" that is happening in not just Scotland but across the World. Let us take comfort and reassurance in the words of an old Chorus, based on Hebrews 13: 8,

*"Yesterday, today, forever, Jesus is the same,
All may change, but Jesus never - glory to His name!"*

In these times of turbulence and change, we continue to trust in a Saviour who is consistent, whose love for us has not and will not change and we should be assured of that even when we can be assured of nothing else.

As limiting as this week may become, I hope you nevertheless make the best of it and know no matter what, God is always near us.

Calum D. Macdonald



Flowers on Display in the Church Again

Hi everyone

Now that the Church is open for Prayer and Reflection Services, flowers are once again being displayed in the church and distributed to folk after the service is over. I would be grateful if you hear of anyone you know that would be happy to receive the flowers on a Sunday after the service that you let me know, especially if there is news of a bereavement, special celebration, etc.

If you would like to make a donation towards the provision of flowers, perhaps marking a key date of Fond memory or in memorium of a loved one no longer with us, then I would be happy to hear from you. Alternatively you could contact the Church office and Elvira our secretary will be happy to assist in this, whether booking a Sunday date in the calendar or passing on a donation.

Wishing you all God's Blessing as we seek to serve Him at this time

Wilma Macdonald

Coming to Church on a Sunday

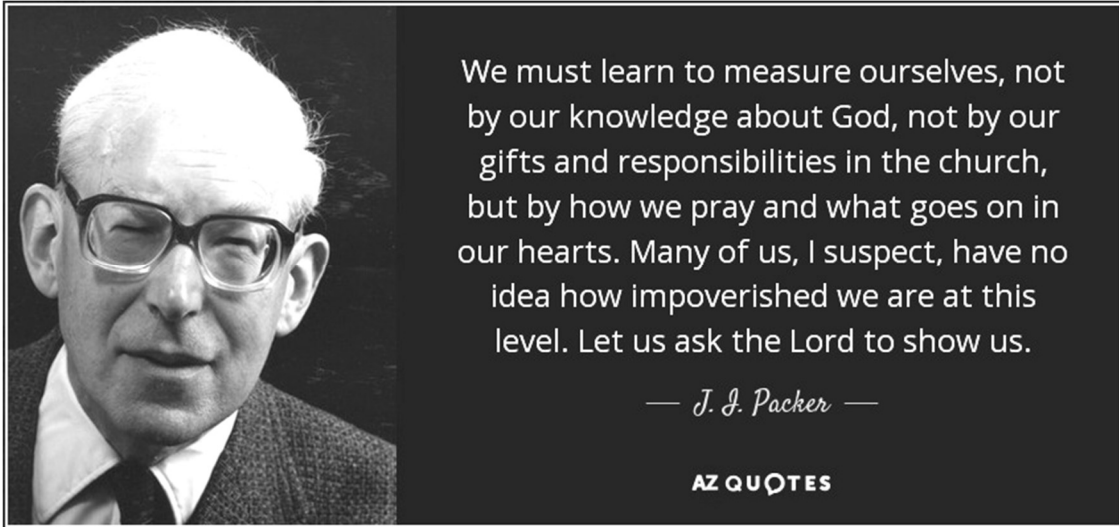
As the Church is now open for Services of Prayer and Reflection each Sunday I hope you will find the following advice and guidelines helpful and reassuring in terms of health and safety.

Our service begins at 11am and all are most welcome to attend but there are a number of things you must know.

1. Current guidance only allows for a maximum of 50 people at any one time.
2. We must adhere to the Social Distance guidance of keeping 2m both when seating and entering or leaving the building.
3. We would ask that you contact Mr Bert Dickov if you wish to attend Church service, (He is our contact person for Track and Trace: Mob No. 07947611412 or if you prefer then email him at bertdickov@hotmail.com)
4. The Church is now equipped with Hand Sanitizers to wash your hands on entry and leaving the building. And you will be asked wear a face covering, at all times. Don't worry if you forget to bring one we will have some handy should you need it.

These guidelines I believe when we follow then help the church to be one of the safest of public places to attend and i hope you would feel reassured by that.

Calum D. Macdonald



This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. (1 John 5: 14)

Let us pray...

Heavenly Father we praise you for the joy, the beauty and the glory of Your Creation. As its Maker and Designer, the world is your handiwork and You remain at the heart of all things, the source of life and power. We thank You that you are the God of new life and new beginnings, that you have a plan to make all things new and that you have given us all the opportunity of new life again, even eternal life, secured by and in Jesus' name and his alone.

Lord God we confess that we come before You with many things on our minds. We all too often see the wrong doing in others and fail to see our own short comings. Forgive us for the manner in which we have treated others and treated You, being impatient and unwilling to be gracious and merciful, as You have been to us.

Gracious God Help us to be slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. Teach us how we might be comfortable in your Presence. Fill us with Your Grace and that measure of Your Love that we might love each other as you have loved us and as we gather before you in the privacy of this moment, grant us reassurance so that when we are at risk of being overcome by a spirit of fear, helps us to stand sure and steadfast in the power of Your Strength.

Father in Heaven, in the quietness of these moments alone with you, speak to our hearts and remind us of your ever abiding presence, no matter what may befall. Reassure us that You will be with us and never forsake us and as we pray that prayer for ourselves, we pray also for others at this time

of the year, where Farmers bring the crops in, where the shops are filled with food on the shelves and we can thank You once more for your great provision, we also recognise that there are those who cannot make that prayer this day.

As churches across the land look to celebrate this time of harvest, we would remember also those for whom the harvest was not so plentiful; those who have lost their employment and are worried about their capacity to financially provide for their families, those who have no home and are on the street with nowhere to go and no-one to turn to, those whose relationships have broken down and whose futures are uncertain, those whose mental health has been impacted by these troubling pandemic times, those whose physical health has been impacted by illness and even the fear of death itself. Those who have seen death take their loved one from them and who miss them terribly.

Our Father in Heaven come alongside them as the Great Provider once more. Be the Miracle that they need at this time, that miracle that transforms circumstances for the good, that miracle of Grace that changes lives and lifestyles, that miracle that reassures and reaffirms people in your love, and offers light in lives filled with dark moments, that brings strength for those who need healing, comfort and hope for those who grieve today.

For our nation's leaders and those nations across the world whose leaders all struggle to cope with all that is going on at this time, bring your wisdom and counsel to bear we pray. Give them an integrity and concern for the many not the few.

Draw near to us all as we seek to draw near to you for this we ask in Jesus' name..... Amen



Seek the Lord
AND HIS STRENGTH,
Seek his face
CONTINUALLY!
1 CHRONICLES 16:11

Our Bible Reading
Today is
1 Chronicles 16: 1 - 16

Ministering Before the Ark

16 They brought the ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and they presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before God. ² After David had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD. ³ Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each Israelite man and woman.

⁴ He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to extol,^[a] thank, and praise the LORD, the God of Israel: ⁵ Asaph was the chief, and next to him in rank were Zechariah, then Jaaziel,^[b] Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-Edom and Jeiel. They were to play the lyres and harps, Asaph was to sound the cymbals, ⁶ and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests were to blow the trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God.

⁷ That day David first appointed Asaph and his associates to give praise to the LORD in this manner:

*⁸ Give praise to the LORD, proclaim his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.*

⁹ Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.

*¹⁰ **Glory in his holy name;**
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.*

*¹¹ **Look to the LORD and his strength;**
seek his face always.*

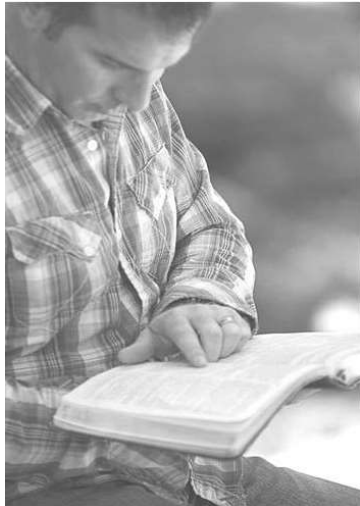
*¹² Remember the wonders he has done,
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,*

*¹³ you his servants, the descendants of Israel,
his chosen ones, the children of Jacob.*

¹⁴ He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

*¹⁵ He remembers^[c] his covenant forever,
the promise he made, for a thousand generations,*

*¹⁶ the covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath he swore to Isaac.*



Seek the Lord
AND HIS STRENGTH,
seek his face
CONTINUALLY!
1 CHRONICLES 16:11

The Clipart Above gives away the central theme of this morning's devotional and in many ways the thought expressed will be a simple reminder of what is centrally important for the Christian to be able to live his or her life in such a way that bring God honour and glory even during these difficult times that we live in. The Key verse for us today is that of verses 10 & 11

*¹⁰ Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.*

*¹¹ Look to the LORD and his strength;
seek his face always.*

I Chronicles 13 - 17 tells the story of the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant, which was so central to the religious life of the Hebrews. King David having met with the Elders and his Army Commanders seeks to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem where David would initiate the Building of the Temple in the later part of his Reign and his son Solomon would see through to completion. By the time we get to 1 Chronicles 16: the Ark has been eventually brought to the city of Jerusalem some months later and what we have read today is about the celebration that is entered into honouring the Elders and the Captains of the Army who fulfilled this task. They honour these men by making a sacrifice to God of 7 Rams and 7 Bulls. As part of the proceedings David initiates an act of Worship with the singing of a psalm. This psalm is not so much a piece created by Him. It was a composite from three other psalms (Psalms 105, 96 & 106).

I like to think of this psalm as being more like a medley of songs. Very often in some churches today they will not follow the traditional pattern of what has become known as the proverbial "Hymn Sandwich" that we are so used to in the Church of Scotland. They instead have what is often referred to as "A time of Worship" where they will spend some 15 or 20 minutes in Worship singing one song after the other. This Psalm as part of this great

celebration on the arrival of the Great Ark of the Covenant holds within it some key thoughts and desires for expression. The psalm begins with an ascription to Praise God. Our equivalent might be that of the doxology more often used at the end of a service - "

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost!*

The theme of verse 1 - 16 centres on two things that I believe are inextricably linked to each other and implicit in the Christian Life. One is the Desire to Worship. The Ascription is to Praise God for all that He has done and continues to do. That sits at the heart of Public Worship on Sunday Mornings. If you have ever wondered about the structure of a traditional Church service it begins with our Approach to God where we recognise his Majesty and Grace and Mercy and Forgiveness, all the attributes that theologians and hymn writers have written extensively. Hymns like e.g.

Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness

Glory be to God the Father

To God be the Glory.... to name but a few.

These Hymns recognise the great attributes of his person, His Eternal Power, His unchanging nature, His omnipresence and the list goes on culminating in the recognition of the relationship of the Father to the Son and the Holy Spirit. When we understand these things the only thing for us to do is to worship. It is something within our very core and if we cannot Worship God we will worship something else. The illustration of that is when we do not worship God something else tries to fill the void - football team, a golf hobby or some other interest. Pop stars and musicians are so iconic in people's eyes they will dress like them trying to emulate them. For others it might be the God of Science which can answer all the questions that theologians cannot answer - or so they think.

One of the great mysteries is how a man like Adolf Hitler could become so beloved by so many that they could not see through the lie and deception of what he was. That story continues today with blind idolatry for Party Chairmen in the east and Presidents in the west. We have a built in need to Worship someone or something - the question is who will we give our worship to? **Verse 10 speaks of rejoicing and giving thanks and recognising the Glory wonder and Marvel of our Father in Heaven.**

*¹⁰ Glory in his holy name;
let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.*

Verse 11 emphasises the place of Trust in this story.

*¹¹ Look to the LORD and his strength;
seek his face always.*

This is the other theme centred in verses 1 - 16. Trust and Faith remains a central part implicitly and explicitly in the Christian Life. The Word Always is Key here.

Look to the Lord **Always**

Look to His Strength **Always**

Seek his Face **Always**

So often today we will not always look to God but rather look to ourselves or to others before we will seek the Lord. Prayer is so often the Court of Last Appeal when it should always be the first. One of the most recent movies to star Tom hanks is called 'Greyhound' where he plays the part of a Captain leading his first convoy across the U-Boat infested North Atlantic during World War II. The first things you see him doing as his day begins is when he gets off his knees with his bible or prayer book in his hand having committed his day and the men who serve with him to God. There is a lesson in that illustration that we Look to the Lord Always.

There are also those moments in life when people can no longer run on their own strength and someone else needs to give them the strength to carry on. One of the things I believe we will see as time wears on and as society increasingly marginalises the importance of Christian faith for life today will be that people will lose heart and not have the strength to carry on in the ways that they have before. I have many memories of the occasion of a funeral where the family don't know how they are going to cope and how afterwards they tell you, "I don't know how I managed to get through that day." Paul the Apostle Said "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13) or Jesus who said " with God nothing is impossible." (Matt 19: 26). Look to his Strength Always.

Finally in seeking his Face Always, it simply conveys that we will undertake to follow through the idea of relationship. Our Christian Faith is not a list of do's and don'ts, it is based on the relationship we enjoy with our Father in Heaven through Jesus. The conversations people had with him were about relating Him, To God and with others. The isolation that so many have faced during this time of Pandemic has left people excised from their families and friends at times. Young people interviewed about the current restrictions rebelliously saying how they couldn't go without seeing their friends and we will all have seen the heart rending news footage of families

cut off from their older parents or those who are frail and elderly isolated from their family and friends. Christian faith is all about the relationship of every believer to God and his Son but also our brothers and Sister in Christ. At the heart of all that lies a simple principle to live by - Seek His Face always.

I hope you will look to the Lord Always, seek his strength always and seek him always even where you think he may never be found. For there is nowhere we can go or hide where our Father and his son have not already been.

Have a great week folks even with all that is happening.

Calum D. Macdonald

*May the Lord
Jesus Christ
Himself and God
our Father, Who
loved us and by
His grace gave
us eternal
encouragement
and good hope,
encourage your
hearts and
strengthen you
in every good
deed and word."*

