

Good morning everyone,

Welcome to another devotional seeking to offer encouragement, reassurance and perhaps even challenge in these 'interesting times' we live in. With all that is a happening around us seeming to be in a perpetual state of flux, it is my hope that you are nevertheless able to rise to the challenge of living in these days. I had hoped that by the end of the summer and certainly by the autumn, we would be beginning to come through these turbulent times, but the early indicators are that this is not so and we may be living with Covid-19 for some time to come.

The good news for the time being is that we are still able to open for Sunday mornings with a time for Reflection and Prayer and while it is not what church used to be, it is at least as close as we can make it. I want to say a word of thanks to those who posted on Facebook of how nice it was to be back together in church again. There will be many today who are still nervous about coming to church, given these times of Covid-19 but it is my hope always that in time, as confidence grows about going out and as testing and tracking is more finely tuned and better and faster treatments become available and survivability from this awful worry becomes more assured, then the good folks of Park Church (and indeed all churches) may once again enjoy the simple pleasure of being in God's House, Singing God's Praise, hearing God's Word and spending time with God's people - a Blessing to look forward to.

I had a phone call this week from the pastoral care team of Presbytery just checking to see how things were with myself and the family and it reminded me of the nature of church that we should all be looking to be caring for one another in that way. Our theme for Sunday is very much along those lines. It is my hope that each one in our Church family are contending

with things well but I wanted to reaffirm the invitation that should anyone need someone to speak to me, my door is open and my phone is available. We might need to wear masks and observe a certain social distance but we can work with that. I currently base myself in the Church Committee Room three afternoons each week from Tuesday - Thursday's unless conducting a funeral service or attending some other situation that might arise. Elvira Sanza, our Church Secretary based at the Church office is also available on these afternoons and she will pass on any messages to me in my absence.

My Thanks to those Elders of our Kirk Session who have kept in touch with those in their district, in some cases, often passing on copies of our weekly Devotional such as this one I am currently putting together and have been doing so faithfully week by week since the beginning of the lockdown in March earlier this year. A rising concern that seems to be on everyone's lips these days is centred on the issue of mental health arising from the increased isolation felt by so many particularly at this time.

As you are all part of our church family here in the Park Church and that includes those who been receiving our devotionals with connections elsewhere, please be assured of our best wishes and a desire to be of as much support as we can be in these difficult days and of you need someone to talk to re-iterate my door is open and you should feel free to get in touch.

With that being said, let me close by wishing you God's Blessing and a good week ahead.

Yours in Christ

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Giffnock: the Park Church
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**God's Work
Our Hands**




*“As is the business of tailors to make clothes
and cobblers to make shoes,
so it is the business of Christians to pray.”*
– Martin Luther

Let us pray,

Our Gracious God and Father, we can see how the Heavens and the earth are full of your Glory. You are Eternal, Almighty, and Holy in ways we can never begin to aspire to. You deserve the praise of every creature and you are so worthy of worship and we should honour that with our response and our love recognising that You have Loved us from the First. You are the Creator, the One who Sustains, our Redeemer and the One who Renews us. You are perfect in Wisdom and Might and you Reign supreme over the bounds of Space and Time.

Our Response can only be to have faith and to Worship, to voice our Adoration and if we could be able to sing at this time in church, it would be to sing Your Praises, to Thank You for Jesus, his life and example for us to follow, for his Death and by it the defeat of sin and his Resurrection which is our hope of redemption and the promise of eternity with You. As if that were not enough, you have given us the Guarantor of your Holy Spirit to dwell within us. For all that we can only thank you and praise You.

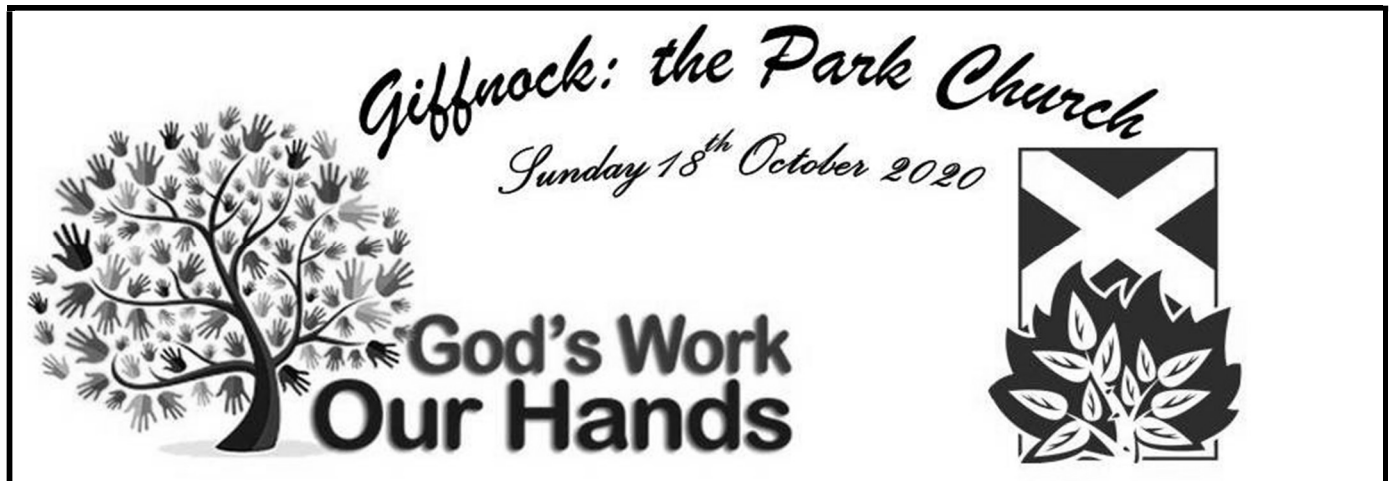
Yet Gracious God, we confess we still need the power of your Saving Grace because there are times we fail to see these great Attributes of your Character at work in us and we fail to respond to the offer of your Grace and Mercy. We confess that in your Call to us to be an Ambassador to all whom we come in contact with - we have let you down.

Forgive us Loving God and in your forgiveness empower us to be more than we are at present in your eyes. Stir us by your Spirit at work within us to share the Gospel as you have called us to by what we say and how we say it, by what we do and how we do it. By your Grace at work within us may we see a consistency in our Christian lives that others may see and be drawn to Christ through.

We pray for all at this time called to your Service in a full and part time capacity those in Ministry across the Church, those in pastoral Care looking after the welfare of others, those whose call is to go overseas to distant lands and dangerous places. Bless them all we pray with success in all they do.

For now, continue with us as we reflect on your Word and as we focus once again upon your Call upon all our lives this day in Jesus name we pray.

Amen.



Romans 12: 1 - 21

New International Version - UK

A living sacrifice

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God - this is your true and proper worship. ² Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Humble service in the body of Christ

³ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.

⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Love in action

⁹ Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. ¹¹ Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. ¹² Be joyful in

hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. ¹³ Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practise hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

¹⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. ¹⁸ If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. ¹⁹ Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord.

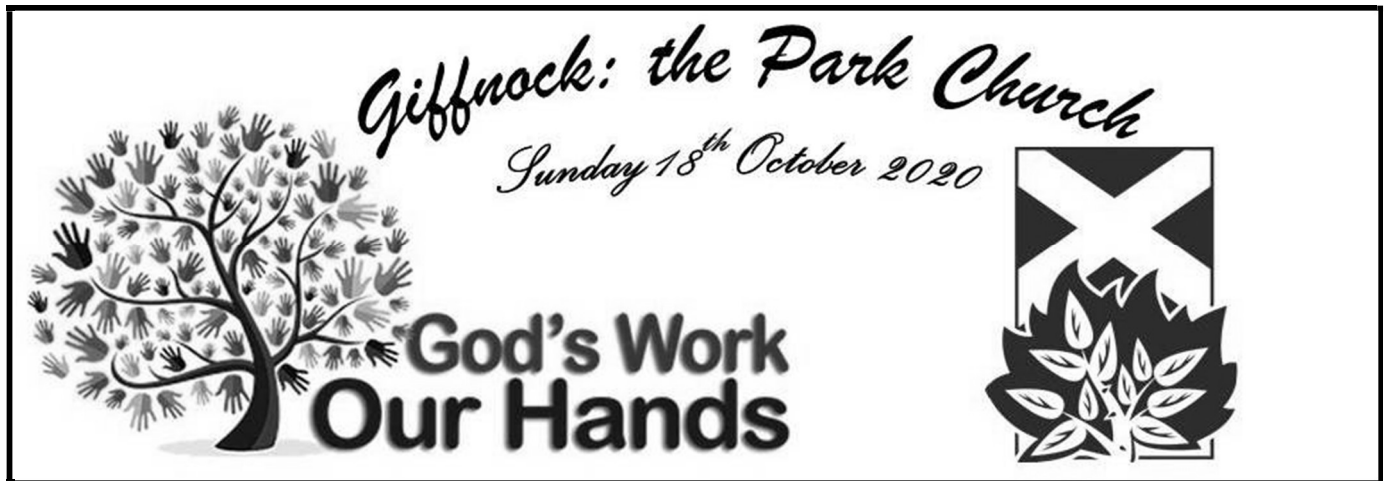
²⁰ On the contrary:

'If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.'

²¹ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.



Today's written devotion will dovetail with the Sunday Morning Service of Reflection and Prayer at church in so many ways and while we reflect on a different part of *God's Word*, the consistency of his teaching comes through it all, whether from the command of Jesus in John's gospel or the Acts of the Apostles or our reading from Paul's letter to the Romans. I know that there are many of my colleagues and some theologians who might argue that Paul the apostle seems to predominate even over Jesus. I have never supported that view because over the years of my time as a minister preparing and giving sermons I have found it is actually the reverse. Romans Chapter 12 demands that we live our lives sacrificially for Jesus. To help us with that I came across a sermon written last year by someone who wanted to share the story of someone who was not sure about what kind of impact she could make for Christ. With your indulgence I want share that story with you which I think goes some way to help us how best to understand Romans 12.

On September 22, in 1871, an elderly British lady, 82 years of age, was finally ushered into her heavenly reward. Earlier in her life, in 1835, her frustration at being an invalid left her feeling useless and she even questioned her very salvation. What she did next however would echo through history.

This young woman was Charlotte Elliot, a lady who at one point was not sure of her relationship with Christ, not sure of how to be saved, even though she had been raised as a minister's daughter. The probing question of a Swiss evangelist she heard asked, "Are you at peace with God?" This question would not leave her mind. When she saw the evangelist a few weeks later, she mentioned that she could not shake his question. She protested about what could she possibly bring to God. When he replied that she need not bring anything but herself, she gladly accepted Christ.

Some twelve years later, in 1835, crippled by illness and constant fatigue, she felt saddened by her inability to help a local church's cause. Remembering her conversion, she took out pen and paper and wrote a poem to encourage others who felt perhaps they too had nothing to give. . .

"Just As I Am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
Oh, Lamb of God, I come..."

Her poem was published and she was inundated with requests for it. She was gladdened to discover later that some copies were being sold to raise money for the very cause she felt helpless to assist!

After her death, thousands of letters were found in her home, written by people whose lives had been transformed by her words. Her Words since put then put to music has been translated into hundreds of languages, published in more than 1600 hymnals, and has reached billions of people around the world, and continues to bring people to Christ even today.

In 1931, a 31-year-old man riding in the sidecar of his brother's motorcycle in England finally came to the end of his internal struggle against whether Christ was indeed the Son of God. He finally knew in his soul that Jesus was indeed just who He said He was! He realised that God calls us to Him "just as we are". When C.S. Lewis stepped out of the sidecar, he was a new man, saved by grace!

Ninety-nine years after Charlotte Elliott penned her words, and 3 years after Lewis' conversion, the 16-year-old son of a dairy farmer listened intently as he heard the message of salvation preached at a revival service in Charlotte, North Carolina. When the song, "Just As I Am," was sung at the end, a young Billy Graham went forward to accept Christ.

Twenty years later, Billy Graham had become a successful evangelist and was invited to speak at Cambridge University in England. His nervousness over the event nearly led him to cancel it. But he was introduced to a kind man named C.S. Lewis who encouraged him to disregard the critics who had spoken out against him, and to continue with the revival meetings.

Billy Graham went on to speak to an overflow crowd of 2,000 each night at these meetings and some years later he would come to Glasgow's Kelvin Hall in 1955 where people came from all over Scotland and beyond each night over that 6 week period. During that time, more than 50,000 people committed their lives to Christ.

And when he returned to England in 1989, he addressed a crowd of 80,000 at England's Wembley Stadium! As always, he closed the event with the same song that brought him to Christ, "Just As I Am." Never think you have "nothing" to bring to Jesus! That is exactly what He wants you to bring... nothing! He wants you, just you, as you are! He can take frustration like Charlotte Elliot's, scepticism like Lewis', and nervousness like Billy Graham's, and reach the world through you!

"Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come."

Isn't that story a timely reminder of one can feel they are not equipped for the task and yet God in his greatness can make the impossible and unimaginable happen, despite that one person feeling her disability to do something to help, it nevertheless resulted in her impacting the lives of thousands. We may never know this side of glory just how many people we have influenced and all we need to do is follow through that which is suggested in Romans Chapter 12. The Text has been broken up into three sections for us that helps with;-

- a) The thing to do
- b) How to do it
- c) Why we should do it in the first place.

Let's take a look at each of these sections. In Romans 12 Vs 1 - 2 our first thought about what to do emphasises the importance of realising that we need to be in a place of being willing to offer ourselves for Service to God. When we do that, we will find that a door of opportunity will open and will make itself plain. You might not be the most eloquent of preachers or the most gifted of musicians or singers but there are times when God uses ordinary people and an ordinary situation in a most remarkable and even miraculous way that could never have been envisaged. Do You think that Charlotte Elliot would ever have imagined for one moment that penning these great words of that old Hymn with the disability she had that she could ever impact quite so many people's lives and set in motion the falling of dominoes that would see an English academic become one of the most well respected of theological thinkers of his day, or that by his encouragement to a young evangelist at just the right time and the words of her hymn could see such a dynamic ministry develop? Of course she couldn't and neither should we. We will never see the full impact this side of Glory of our Christian witness.

This brings us to our second thought - 'How to do it.' Rom 12: 3-8 reminds us that we cannot do everything and nor should we, that our own skill base may enable us to do some things but not all. Prophecy, Faith, Service & hospitality, teaching, leadership, graciousness and generosity all facets of the story of how we make sacrifice. Some of us will be the most brilliant of hosts and whose sterling work in a church kitchen makes the day go so much better. If you had asked my mother in law to preach the sermon on Sunday, the blood would have drained from her cheeks at the very thought but had you asked her to come to the church early and prepare the sanctuary for the worship service on a Sunday, she would have been there from dawn to dusk and on the Sunday, she would have been the one who brought the pancakes and served the tea and coffee with a smile to cheer you on the way. For others in the church we may have Admin skills that could be used to good effect, organising meetings and how they are run, or being able to teach children and or adults. We should never-under estimate the value of Sunday School Teachers and I am grateful of those who are committed to this role. The pastoral role of the elder to come alongside those in their district has never been more critical than now when those in our fellowship might feel a sense of isolation most acutely. Age and infirmity does not stop one from being able to pray for one another in the church. I would say two things about prayer. One is to reiterate the words of Alfred Lord Tennyson, who said "More things are wrought by prayer than this world Ever Dreamed" and the other is that we should understand that prayer makes things happen.

In his biography 'Channel of Revival', Duncan Campbell tells the story of how he as the Principal of Free Church College in Edinburgh, he was summoned by three blind sisters living on the isle of Lewis to come and see him. He was told that the Lord had called him to come to Lewis and what ensued from that meeting became known as the Lewis Revival where the very presence of God seemed to fall on the island itself transforming the lives of so many all through three sisters praying for others round about them. Look to your gift and see where God can use You.

The final section of Romans 12 vs 9- 21 while the longest section is summed up best in the opening words of Verse 9: "Love must be sincere". We have words for people who are insincere, we sometimes refer to them as smarmy, two-faced, hypocritical, disingenuous or artificial. People can see through those whose love is insincere and the church comes under the most well deserved and harshest of criticism at times because our response has been insincere. However, when we are seen to be fully sincere in what we do

and why we do it people take interest. Our previous co-ordinator for Glasgow Street Pastors, Gary Killingsworth told those of us doing our Street Pastors training 10 years ago that "the credibility of Glasgow Street Pastors will last only as long as its integrity." The credibility of any Christian Organisation will only last as long as our integrity. Church denominations that have covered up the activity of Child abuse within their ranks have been scathingly criticised by the general public and rightly so because they have failed to uphold the wisdom of Romans 12: 9 - our Love must be sincere.

In finishing this devotion let me just encourage you to fulfil the call of Christ through Paul the Apostle: offer yourself as a living Sacrifice to Him this day, use your gift, whatever gift it may be, to the service of his Church and Christ himself cheerfully and all the while, be sincere in the love with which we fulfil our Christian calling in these difficult days. I hope the week before us is one of where we can be reaffirmed in God's love for us and that we can affirm others of God's love for them

Yours in Christ

Calum D. Macdonald



*May God's blessing
surround you each day
As you trust Him
and walk in His way
May His presence within
guard and keep you from sin,
Go in peace,
go in joy,
go in love.*