

Giffnock: the Park Church



*I am the vine,
you are the branches.*
John 15:5



Sunday 25th April 2021

Good Morning,

A warm welcome to our Devotional as yet again we come to consider what God might be saying to our hearts at the close of one week and the beginning of another. Isn't it nice to see the weather looking more favourably upon us? The story of yet another loosening of the tight restrictions placed upon church from Monday onwards helps us see that maybe just maybe, our time of sustained restriction is coming to an end as we see those in enforced isolation because of underlying health issues are finally able to begin the story of reintegration. I look out my window and Rouken Glen Road is as busy on the Saturday now as it was before all this began. When out walking I saw how folks were now able to set their picnic blanket out in the park so that they could sunbathe in this glorious stretch of weather we are having.

The big change of course is that Shops are about to open again. (I'm off to Hobbycraft tomorrow - Airfix here we come), and more importantly we can once again meet up with friends or family over lunch in a restaurant or enjoy a tea or coffee together in a coffee shop. Our churches are gradually making the moves to ease lockdowns as well seeking to keep in step with changes as they come into play across the nation. From Monday, as we come down to the Tier 3 restrictions, the cap of numbers attending church services is to be lifted completely. Currently you could only have up to 50 people allowed to attend a church service at any one given time. While the cap on the numbers attending has been lifted, the requirement for 2m Social Distancing, the wearing of masks and of course, no singing still remains in place. We will also still need everyone wanting to come to church to give advance notice of this wherever possible, the details being on the Intimations page.

In reality, our numbers able to attend doesn't really change at this stage because the size of our Sanctuary with the restrictions that remain still limits our numbers able to attend to no more than 50. That all being said, I cannot help but feel that this time the roadmap out of lockdown is now underway and while there may still be a few bumps in the road yet, I think we can look to the summer and beyond and see it being somewhat different from Last year and more like what we have known in years gone by - here's hoping. In the meantime the aim will be to continue with these written devotions - at least in the short term along with the other video "Stuff" as well as the Church Prayer & Reflection services now well re-established on Sunday mornings. In the meantime, I trust you will all keep well or at least as well as you can be.

With best wishes

Announcements

Carnwadric Foodbank



We have received an update from Rev Jim Gemmell at Carnwadric Church and thought to share this update with you. *"We are happy to take anything donated, but have found supporters are keen to know what we are needing in particular."*

Please find the list below:

UHT milk, Sugar Coffee Juice (diluting)

Tinned carrots or peas Custard, Rice pudding, Fruit, Spaghetti, Beans, Soups Tins for meals: Mince, Stews, Hotdogs, Ham, Corned beef. Ravioli, Mac and Cheese

Also Cleaning Products & Personal Hygiene Products.

Any and all help with this will be gratefully Received and may God bless you for it.

Jim

*Rev. James Gemmell; Carnwadric Parish Church
556 Boydstone Road, Glasgow G46 8HP*



Church Flowers

Flowers this week were kindly donated for the church by Mrs Fiona Mackie in fond memory of her Mother, Mrs Catriona Stewart



Re-opening of Church

It is Vital that You Please observe the following Guidelines

To prevent congestion at the Door and thus maintain Social Distance
Please give advanced notice of your intention to attend Church that
Sunday. This is very important and easy to do.

Simply contact Bert or Sandra Dickov on either 01413168143 or
07947611412

a) Please wear a mask at all times when in the premises

b) Please only sit in the designated seating zones.

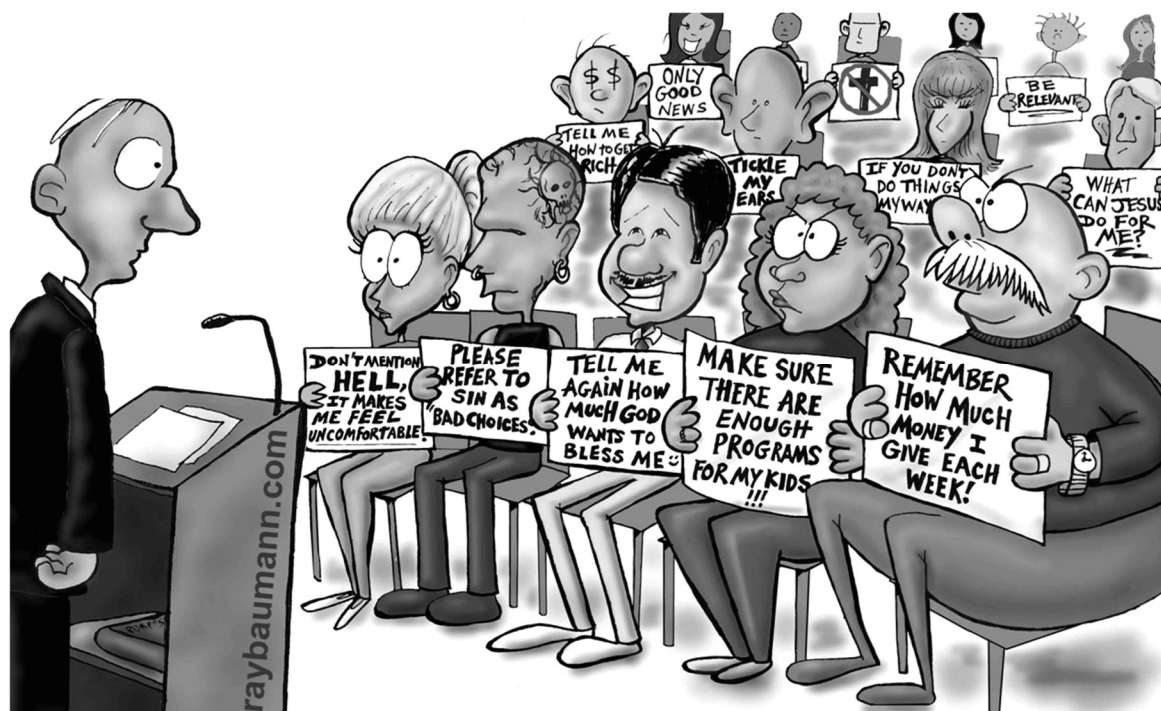
Those part of the Same social Bubble are allowed to sit together - but only those

c) Please use the Sanitisation available at the door on entry and when retiring from the Church at the end of the Service.

d) Please follow the one way system in and out of the Church.

e) Whether Outside or Inside -
Please always maintain a 2m distance

Thank You



"A Dilemma for Preachers All over "



What is Prayer?



Prayer isn't a ritual that depends on closing our eyes and putting on holy faces. We don't have to kneel or sit. We can pray while walking, driving, or working. God responds to a two word cry for help in the middle of a busy afternoon, just like He does to a focused prayer time after reading Scripture in the morning. Praying doesn't have to be complicated. God delights in any simple words we offer Him.

(Crosswalk.com)

Let us Pray...

Our Gracious God and Father, as we come before you at the end of one week and another beginning, we pray that you would indeed draw near to us and refresh our hearts this day with a fresh vision of your great love and mercy upon us day by day and week by week. Enlighten us with that sense of your presence that we might see how You work in and through our lives. Help us to realise afresh the majesty of your power, the extent of your Grace and the wonder of your great Love. Let your Spirit and power breathe in us and through us, again, fresh and new. Thank you that you are greater than anything we may face in our day. Thank you that your presence goes with us, and that Your joy is never dependent on our circumstances, that You are our true and lasting strength, no matter what we're up against. Grant us the wisdom to make the best choices, fill us with a desire to seek after you more than anything else in this world. Guard our hearts and minds in you from all that is evil in your Eyes.

Forgive us Heavenly Father when we selfishly look to our own needs first, when we harbour resentment towards others jealously and are intolerant of any view not our own. Forgive that hard heartedness that makes us blind at times to the needs of others. Help us to be more like the Saviour in the Garden who said "Not my Will but Yours". Help us to seek always how we might become more Like Jesus.

Father You call us to be diligent in Prayer and not be thinking of our own needs all the time while others have needs greater than our own, and so in these moments we take time to remember before You those whose needs are greater than ours, those whose health is worse than ours, those whose welfare needs are greater than ours, those who have no one to turn to and those who have nowhere they can go for shelter or for help. As our nation seems to be on the road of recovery from this pandemic, we remember those nations of distant lands as well, those nations closer to home where disease is rife and out of control. We pray for Healing and strength, for reassurance and care and that you would pierce the dark wall of isolation, loneliness and depression for all concerned. May your Church be of such positive influence that it reawakens the need for looking to the Saviour once again and so we pray that you would move in our hearts but that move also in the hearts of others for whom we have prayed this day in Jesus' name...Amen

Reading our Bible - A Vital Spiritual Discipline



John 15: 1 - 17 **The Vine and the Branches**

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

⁹ “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. ¹¹ I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹² My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.



I am the vine,
you are the branches.
John 15:5



Good morning,

In thinking about the theme for our Devotional and Church Service this morning, I had thought to perhaps visit the text of John 15: 1 - 17 where we see God's Word homing in on one of the great "I am" saying of Jesus, specifically, "I am the True Vine and you are the Branches". Presenting these thoughts to you came from two points of inspiration, one being that Thursday 22nd April was Earth Day, where those like Greta Thunberg are among the most passionate about the Stewardship of the Earth's resources and are keen to use this day as a commemoration to focus on what we would now describe as the central Green Issues that face all who live on the planet. The second was perhaps slightly more trivial in that I gave the manse garden its first mowing of the lawn. We got to sit outside in the garden afterwards and enjoy lunch outside at the garden table where for a short while at least we could simply enjoy the sun and watch the World go by.

As many of you know, gardening is not my first love but I recognise that for many it is a passion like no other. One of Wilma's colleagues from work was an avid Gardener and she had a plaque on the wall of her house overlooking the Garden where it cited the words of the poet, Dorothy Frances Gurney,

"Kiss of the sun for pardon.

Song of the birds for mirth.

You're closer to God's heart in a garden

Than any place on earth.

It would have been nice if she would have said something similar about building Airfix models but somehow I don't see that happening any time soon.

Illustrations from the natural world were often something Jesus would tie in with what he was trying to teach those who were his listeners. John 15 uses

the image of the vine to make two Statements, "I am the True Vine and my Father is the Gardener" as well as "I am the Vine and You are the Branches. Someone did some research about the grapevine to discover that there were not just two types of Grape (Red and Green) but in fact there are 10,000 varieties of grape and the reason they are so popular around the world is that they grow in all kinds of soil and they readily adapt to poor soil conditions making them obviously a very popular and valuable crop the world over along with fact they can ferment wine from it.

Our Key focus this morning is going to centre round that of John 15: 5,
⁵ *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

We will consider a number of things about this verse and how it applies to our setting here in the west of Scotland.

There is an understanding from this that is borne from looking at this chapter in Allegorical Terms. Jesus would often speak allegorically looking to cryptically teach his listeners while at the same time confounding his critics. An allegory is a Story with a hidden or symbolic meaning and so Jesus uses the vineyard and the tending of the vineyard as an analogy to draw certain themes/ truths to heart. Verse 5 speaks of the relationship of Christ to the Church and the need for the Church to bear fruit. The branches of the vine are connected to the vine itself from which it draws its nutrition and stability to be able to bear "good fruit". It is not rocket-science to realise that the relationship of the Christian to Jesus is at the centre of what we are and what we do as Christians - the Roots of our Faith are in Christ himself and no other. (Apart from me you can do nothing - verse 5) The use of Fruit as a metaphor has always been a strong Christian motif used not just by Jesus but also by the Apostle Paul.

The first thing we need to consider about John 15: 1-17 is that the Call of God to the Church is that we be people who bear "Good Fruit".

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last" **(John 15: 16)**

But what does it mean to bear good fruit? I think we need to understand this in corporate terms but also at an individual level. There will be times when the priority of one overrides the other but the overall goal will be the same.

How then can we understand what good fruit is? Someone once gave a very helpful breakdown of this that I thought I would share. We can see that this allegorical fruit takes a variety of forms.

Firstly, the good fruit is something we see in our lives corporately as a church of God's people but also individually as a man or woman of faith and that is seen in the Good works that we do and actions we undertake. It is something driven by our faith and is not the means of our Salvation as many would like to think. Our faith is what makes the difference here not our works but as always with Christian living what we believe must also tie in with what we say and do.

Secondly, good fruit is often seen in the ways in which we help others to find faith in Jesus. In many ways our National Church has lost sight of this important aspect of the life of faith. We major on many great projects that seek to have the impact of doing good for others but we have forgotten that Our central purpose for being on this earth is first and foremost to tell others of the Good news of what Jesus has managed to achieve and how that can impact them for not for just this life that we live but for all eternity. We all in the National Church need to rediscover that evangelical heart for the Saving Souls again. (Matt 28: 20 and the Great Commission)

Thirdly, we need to understand good fruit to have a bearing on our individual lives as men and women of faith where we see in the metaphor of Jesus language this need to have the very traits of the Spirit of Christ living within us. Paul the Apostle has famously summed this beautifully as the Fruits of the Spirit when he wrote his letter to the Galatian Church defining what these good fruits might- **"the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control."** (Galatians 5: 22)

There is a story told of 2 men in a church who were very different. One was man who had been a hard worker over the years but who was always both sad and grumpy all the time. This man was in conversation with his neighbour and as they were talking his neighbour said that he was never happier than when he was in church. It was his favourite place. This was not the sad and grumpy man's personal experience of church but as he thought about it, he

decided to give church a chance. He went one Sunday, then the following Sunday and the next after that. He eventually became a regular at church worship and in time made his profession faith. His wife then came along and she too became a member. His neighbours saw a change, there was a contentment and peace in the man that they hadn't seen before - his nature and demeanour had changed and for the better since going to Church.

The other man of our two-man story however was different. He professed to being a Christian but he saw his mission as being to complain and criticise. While he complained about a lot of things, his biggest gripe was the volume of the organ music in his church. He complained to everyone in the church. One day, someone from the Environmental Health Department appeared at the church talking about excess decibel levels in the church. Having received this complaint, the Environmental Health Department felt obliged to investigate and so an EH officer met with the minister and told him why he was there. The minister knew exactly who had complained and explained to the EH officer what was going on. The gentleman from the local council listened intently and then told the minister that when the office heard about the complaint, he was constantly niggled by his colleagues jokingly because he was going to shut down this church. Suffice to say, the church did not shut down as the complainant had hoped who eventually just became angrier and more uncooperative and unwilling to speak with others till he left the church, an older man filled with sadness, anger and resentment. The question that arises from our second story in particular is where was the evidence of God's Good fruit - **God's love, joy, peace, forbearance** (a capacity for Tolerance), **kindness, goodness, faithfulness,** ²³**gentleness and self-control.**"

The measure of our discipleship will be in the fruit that we bear, the good works that we enter into, the passion we have to see others come to faith and the evidence of the fruits of God's Spirit in how we behave - all governed and instigated by our faith in the Saviour. Someone else summed things up nicely for us in a sermon given elsewhere when he said, "The fruit of being a Christian is a transformed life! Jesus is clear, the fruit, the result of being his disciple is that we bear fruit, much fruit, fruit that will last."

Have a great week

Calum

*As we seek the Blessing
of God Upon us,
May God's love surround us
as His Spirit guides us,
May God's whisper cheer us,
while His peace calms us,
May God's shield protect us,
while His Wisdom prepares us
And for the times ahead,
wherever God may lead us,
May the Blessing of God
Almighty, Father Son and Holy
Spirit be with each and every one
of us now and always*