

Giffnock: the Park Church



Sunday 3rd January 2021

Good Morning everyone,

A Good New Year to all our friends, at this time of the year. I trust that you have been able to enjoy Christmas and now the festivities of the New Year albeit under the somewhat tighter restraints brought in to keep us as safe and free of infection as much as possible. Let us all hope that 2021 will be a "Year of the Lord's Favour" after the year we have just come out of.

I am sure we will all have both positive and negative thoughts today about 2020 and the arrival of Covid-19, a year that has truly been like no other, where on the one hand economies and industry across the world came to a standstill, households became restricted to barracks, there was constant sanitising of the hands, wearing of masks and social distancing and even our churches have been shut down and congregations have been forced into Zooming and virtual services, etc. The death rate across the nations exponentially rose, with 1.8 million people having since died from this disease, over 74000 of these people being here in the UK. It has been a time where we saw the worst excesses of racism in politics and policing and the depravity of war in certain parts of the world.

On the other hand, we have also seen Humanity at its best. When the bible asks the question "who is my neighbour?", the answer to that was seen in the many individuals who went out of their way to help others round about them, where those who were shielding because of age or health restriction saw the good folk next door at their best seeking to ensure their well-being. The selflessness of Care Staff in Nursing Homes forfeiting their families to care for those in their charge to ensure they and their families safety, our Doctors and Nurses and other health care professionals and emergency

services in our hospitals and in the Community seeking to exemplify the UK as having some of the finest Health Care professionals some of whom not only went above and beyond the call of duty but who went to work that day and becoming casualties of this dreadful disease themselves. It has been amazing to see how scientists across the world have pulled all their resources to find the means by which we can combat this awful illness by producing a workable and safe vaccine. That truly was the year that was and we are all, I am sure, glad to see the year of 2020 passing and 2021's arrival.

For my part I am looking forward to a new dawn as the Vaccination programme begins to make its mark. (No pun intended), that we will be able to look forward to the day where we can once again see life return to some sense of normality, to eat out again in our favourite restaurants or visit the shops, go to the cinema or the theatre, to fly to our favourite sun-baked holiday destinations, to meet in one another's homes again without fear that the "Polis" would be breaking down the door and dispersing an illegal gathering.

Perhaps most of all, it will be that I can come again to a Church Service and worship in song and fellowship, that we can all break bread and drink wine together remembering the heart of that symbolism and the joy of God's promised Salvation. I will look forward to that day that I can stand at the door of our church and shake hands with people having enjoyed the opportunity of worshipping together and having had fellowship over tea or coffee. These simple things that we hesitate to do now we will be able to do again freely. For now, we must be patient, or as they say in Glasgow "Keep the Heid" and bide our time. In closing let me simply do so by re-iterating that we all - 'Keep the Heid" and stay safe even for a wee while longer.

With best wishes for 2021

Calum & Wilma Macdonald



God waits for you to communicate with Him. You have instant, direct access to God. God loves mankind so much, and in a very special sense His children, that He has made Himself available to you at all times.

Dr. Wesley L. Duewel (1916 – 2016)

Let's end this year with a thankful heart and start the New Year with peace and faith. Let us release the bitterness and frustrations of the past year. Let us move into the next year knowing that God loves us and wants the best for us. Let's pray that the new year will be focused on healing ourselves through repentance and the renewing of our minds. We were not meant to do life alone! We can bring the light of hope into our own heart, home, and world.

(Joint Statement by the Staff of ChristianityToday.com)

(Our prayer today is adapted from a Prayer for the New Year by Billy Graham)

Let us Pray

Our Gracious and Loving God and Father, having come through one of the most difficult of years in our lifetime and now as we stand at the beginning of this new year, we confess our need of Your presence and Your guidance as we face the future. We each have our hopes and expectations for this year that lies ahead of us—but You alone know what it holds for us, and only You can give us the strength and the wisdom we will need to meet its challenges. So help us Gracious God, to humbly put our hands into Your hand, and to trust You and to seek Your will for our lives during this coming year.

In the midst of life's uncertainties in these days ahead, assure us of the certainty of Your unchanging love.

In the midst of life's inevitable disappointments and heartaches, help us to turn to You for the stability and comfort we will need.

In the midst of life's temptations and the pull of our stubborn self-will, help us not to lose our way but to have the courage to do what is right in Your sight, regardless of the cost.

And in the midst of our daily preoccupations and pursuits, open our eyes to the sorrows and injustices of our hurting world, and help us to respond with compassion and sacrifice to those who are friendless and in need. May our constant prayer be that of the ancient Psalmist: "Teach me, O Lord, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end" (Psalm 119:33).

We pray for our nation this day, for those in positions of political leadership and responsibility during these difficult times; bring wisdom and

integrity to bear upon every act passed and decision made, may they always seek the good of others before themselves. We pray for our Sovereign Queen and all in her house. We remember before You all those who are seeking to bring peace and justice to our dangerous and troubled world. We pray especially for Your protection on all, and especially those who serve in our armed forces, as we thank You for their commitment to defend our freedoms, even at the cost of their own lives. Be with their families also, and assure them of Your love and concern for them.

Bring all across our nation together, and give us a greater vision of what You would have us to be. Your Word reminds us that "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalm 33:12). Help us once again to become 'the Land of the Book, with a heartfelt passion to take your Love to others in Christ's name.

As we look back over this past year we thank You for Your goodness to us and how you have continued to sustain us —far beyond what we have deserved. May we never presume on Your past goodness or forget all Your mercies to us, but may they instead lead us to repentance, and to a new commitment to make You the foundation and centre of our lives this year. And so, Father, we thank You for the promise and hope of this new year, and we look forward to it with expectancy and faith for this we ask in the name of our Lord and Saviour, who by His death and resurrection has given us hope both for this world and the world to come.

Amen.

BUT THE WISDOM
that is from above
IS FIRST PURE,
then peaceable, gentle,
AND EASY TO BE INTREATED,
full of mercy and good fruits,
WITHOUT PARTIALITY,
AND WITHOUT HYPOCRISY.
~ JAMES 3:17 ~

2 Corinthians 5: 1 -21

Awaiting the New Body

⁵ For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

⁵ Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

¹¹ Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. ¹² We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. ¹³ If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] **The old has gone, the new is here!** ¹⁸ All this is from

God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin^[b] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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THIS YEAR, FOR NEW YEARS, I AM RESOLVING TO DO ALL SORTS OF BAD THINGS SINCE I NEVER EVER STICK TO MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Giffnock: the Park Church



Sunday 3rd January 2021

Good morning,

Someone sent me this humorous post which I thought might be worthwhile sharing with you, it's called

10 Points to Ponder as 2021 starts.

1. The dumbest thing I ever bought was a 2020 planner.
2. 2019: Stay away from negative people.
2020: Stay away from positive people.
3. The world has turned upside down. Old folks are sneaking out of the house & their kids are yelling at them to stay indoors!
4. This morning I saw a neighbour talking to her cat. It was obvious she thought her cat understood her. I came to my house & told my dog.... We had a good laugh.
5. Every few days try your jeans on just to make sure they fit. Pyjamas will have you believe all is well in the kingdom.
6. Does anyone know if we can take showers yet or should we just keep washing our hands?
7. I never thought the comment, "I wouldn't touch him/her with a 6-foot pole" would become a national policy, but here we are!
8. I need to practice social-distancing from the refrigerator.
9. I hope the weather is good tomorrow for my trip out to the bins!
10. Never in a million years could I have imagined I would go into a bank with a mask on and ask for money.

I am pretty certain that these 10 points to ponder will sum up many people's thoughts about 2020. What a year it has been where there have been disappointments and frustrations, cancellations and restrictions, fear for life and health and doubt full of uncertainty. In many ways life for many has come to a complete standstill or has irrevocably changed because of ill health, both physical and mental or unemployment, isolation and loneliness. Many of those who are in their later years have lost confidence to go out and about. Many young people have had such interruption to their education that is too difficult at this stage to assess the impact of and who would have thought industry's idea of the best way for folk to

continue working for the company was to conduct you business across the internet from a bedroom dresser sitting on a dining chair from one's living room. Who would have thought that Facetime, WhatsApp, Skype and Zoom would all become household names as the means by which households would work or socially keep in touch with one another even if you only lived around the corner. Such great means of communication able to keep us in touch with family and friends on the other side of the world has become the way in which you keep in touch with those who are just round the corner.

Although not a betting man, I am willing to wager that those in our world of politics would love to go back in time to the start of this year and revisit the decisions they made and make entirely different decisions. They would maybe want to act sooner on flight restriction or more strictly constrain people's movement and better anticipate NHS PPE Supplies knowing what we know now. They would perhaps have insisted on a better testing regime for those being transferred from a hospital to a Care Home with view to ensuring that they were reducing transmission of the illness then and not facilitating the spread of illness. If only we could just turn the clock back and have a Do-over.

Traditionally the new year in Scotland is full of those with best intentions to learn from the mistakes of the past 12 months and vow to not repeat that mistake and so the proverbial New Year Resolution might be

'I am going to lose weight'..... 'I'm going to give up chocolate', or 'drinking' or 'smoking' or perhaps even - 'I am going to give up chocolate smoking and drinking.'

In my devotions this week the commentator was looking back and was reflecting on how in his Teens he had a large circle of friends, was in great physical shape and knew exactly what he wanted to do in life. He went on to say how all these years later in his middle ages he now had a small but close group of friends, the middle age belly, and was re-training for the third time doing a drastic career change. He was looking back and saying that in one respect that he had wasted many years and wished he could redo those years again. If only there was the means to turn the clock back and reset to the beginning again and start all over.

In everyday life, the past is not something that you can change, you can learn from things you've done and do them differently next time but here is nothing you can do to change the past - humanly speaking.

In Terms of God Almighty however that is a different story. When we read Paul's second letter to the Corinthians in Chapter 5 we read of a real nugget of Gold to hold onto. A chorus written by the British Christian songwriter Dave Bilbrough is a song we have often sung in Church, 'I am a new Creation', the first few lines of which are :-

“I am a new creation, no more in condemnation,
here in the grace of God I stand.”

These lyrics are based on the text of 2 Corinthians 5: 17 where Paul sums things up beautifully,

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!”*

Paul goes on to explain a bit more fully that this means that we can have that moment of forgiveness, where the things that have done or said when we shouldn't, or the things we have not done or said when we should have, they are forgiven, they are not counted against them as Paul defines it. As a consequence we can start again, they no longer hold us back.

We often describe our faith in Jesus like a journey where we start off so well, getting involved in the central mission of the church reaching out to others in Jesus' name, we get fully involved in the life of the church participating in worship, and living life with God. But then we stumble and fall, we sin and mess up, old habits creep back into our lives, old friends come around and we act as we did before to keep up the friendship, we lose interest in Bible study, prayer, and meditation on God's Word. Our thoughts more often drift to things we shouldn't think, than to thoughts we should. And we reach a point described by the songwriter William Cowper's hymn, Oh for a closer walk with God when he writes,

**“Where is the blessedness I knew
When first I saw the Lord?
Where is the soul-refreshing view
Of Jesus and his word?”**

What Paul Realised was that no matter what has happened since our becoming a Christian, whether we made that resolution years ago or recently and have since left that resolution broken and tarnished as if we cannot come back from it - the MARVEL of the GRACE of GOD is that we can do just that. The old is gone and the new has come and that can happen again and again and again. Such is God's patience, He helps us back up. God knows we cannot change ourselves. He knows that without His power and strength, we can do nothing. God wants us to be able to cast aside the bad things we so often crave, and instead draw on the Good available from Him and of course He wants us to share that great treasure with others that they too might find that closer walk with God for themselves.

I don't know whether you have made a New Year Resolution this year and for how long you intend or manage to keep it, but I do know that with every year we celebrate the idea of the old is gone the new has come and that idea sits at the very heart of our Christian Faith and that it is for all regardless whether the most faithful of Christian, or the most inconsistent, whether the world worst agnostic or the most ardent of atheist. The Chance to begin again in God's Grace is yours for the taking now and always.

Have a Guid New Year

Calum



*This coming year, May
The Blessing of God the
Father Almighty,
His son Jesus Christ
& the Holy Spirit
be one of increased
riches in God's Grace.
May we hear God's
voice more clearly,
May we know God's
heart more deeply,*

*May we rest in
God's Love more fully
And may we trust in God's Care
more completely,
As we Walk God's pathway more
peacefully,
And know God's presence more
intimately,
Blessed by God's goodness more
abundantly.*



Adapted from Roy Lessin : Meet me in the Meadow