

Giffnock: the Park Church
Sunday 24th
JANUARY
2021
A time for Reflection

Good Morning everyone,

I hope you are wrapping up well with us having to endure this cold snap of weather. I don't know about you but there is a part of my heart that sinks a bit at times when looking at the weather forecast on the news and you see the onslaught of foul weather coming off the Atlantic and all other points of the compass at times except south where the weather fronts would be more optimistically bright - as if we didn't have enough to contend with. I was talking with one of my colleagues and his wife, both of whom work for the Church of Scotland. I asked them, "So, which of you was first to start showing signs of homicidal tendency to the other with this Lockdown going on and on?" When she stopped laughing, her response was, "Oh, It's about even Stephen".

Dark humour is often a tool for coping with crisis at times, particularly in Scotland. A couple who are close friends of ours have in all the time they have been married seemed to move from one crisis to another, the wife of whom would often be heard to say, "If it wuznae fur bad luck, Ah'd huv nae luck!" An old Minister I knew used to say that he didn't believe in luck good or bad and so he would wish instead they had "Good Fortune". I know what you are going to say, 'What's the difference?' Well I would say there is probably very little other than that of a minister who loved the game of semantics. I don't know if you are one who enjoys good luck or otherwise but our good fortune is that there is One to who we can turn to, one on whom we can rely and in which we can rest our hope and He is Faithful. So no matter what you are feeling this week, lucky or otherwise remember the words of the Psalmist today,

"... my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him." (Psalm 62:5)

In the meantime I hope you have a great week and may we all gain the benefit of our promised vaccinations sooner rather than later but in the meantime, we remain patient and above all safe.

Calum D. Macdonald



"Don't worry about having the right words;
worry more about having the right heart.
It's not eloquence he seeks, just honesty."

~ Max Lucado

A Prayer for these Times

This day Gracious God as we come before You now, help us to see again the Marvel of your Power, your capacity to anticipate things before they happen, your heartfelt knowledge of each one of us, even numbering the hairs on our head.

Loving God we would pray that you help us to remember the many gifts you pour out upon us, The gift of your Love and that Life itself is a gift, that Faith is a gift, Grace and forgiveness are gifts generously bestowed at times when there is no merit in doing so, that even your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord has been a most precious gift.

Help us Heavenly Father, to remember your blessings upon us, the Blessing of Good health and a new day filled with potential, in times where you have called us to be a light in dark moments and dark places with a capacity to bring something wholly new and unique and good into this world with the Good news of the Gospel.

For today Lord God Almighty, teach us to be kind and patient to those who are our families, our friends our colleagues, our neighbours, all whom we come in contact with.

In our weakness, Lord, be our strength; in our sinfulness be that pardoning love; in our need, that all sufficient grace. And in our anxiety, be to us both stillness and rest and at all times be to us the fullness of blessing in Christ our Lord. Teach us to see the beauty around us that we so often ignore, and help us to have that silent longing of the Soul to see you more clearly, to love you more dearly and follow You more nearly this day and the days that follow, in Jesus name we pray
Amen.



The Family of Margaret McPhee

Please remember all in the Family of the late Mrs Margaret McPhee. Funeral arrangements are in place for a service to take place at Linn Crematorium at 4pm on Tuesday 26th January For any further details Please speak with the minister.

2 Corinthians 1: 3-5

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.

The Family of Lynn Paterson

Many will have heard the sad news of the sudden death of Miss Lynn Paterson whose Mother Susan is one of our members and had served as one of our Sunday School Teachers some years ago. As the Family look to contend as best they can with the sorrow of this occasion, please remember them and particularly for Friday 29th January when it is anticipated the family will leave the house around 11.30am and travel to Linn Crematorium for a service of Committal at 12 noon. For those who cannot attend, there will be the opportunity to see the Service streamed live.

Philippians 4: 7

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

The Family of Mrs Isbel (Bel) Simpson

I regret to have to report that we have had the news of the death of one of our Elders, Mrs Bel Simpson who died in the morning of Wed 20th January. Bel was of course not just a long time member of the congregation but a faithful servant of the Kirk Session and Congregation. Please remember Hilary and Dorothy and their families in Prayer at this time as they seek to come to terms with all that has happened. Arrangements for her Funeral Service are yet to be confirmed and I will update you all accordingly when we know more.

Matthew 25: 23

Jesus said... “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.”



Psalm 62: 1 – 12

"The Word of God is like a lion. You don't have to defend a lion. All you have to do is let the lion loose, and the lion will defend itself."

~ Charles Spurgeon

Psalm 62

For the director of music. For Jeduthun.

A psalm of David.

¹ Truly my soul finds rest in God; my salvation comes from him.

*² Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress,
I will never be shaken.*

*³ How long will you assault me? Would all of you throw me down —
this leaning wall, this tottering fence?*

*⁴ Surely they intend to topple me from my lofty place;
they take delight in lies.*

With their mouths they bless, but in their hearts they curse.

⁵ Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.

*⁶ Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.*

*⁷ My salvation and my honour depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.*

*⁸ Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.*

*⁹ Surely the lowborn are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie.
If weighed on a balance, they are nothing;
together they are only a breath.*

*¹⁰ Do not trust in extortion or put vain hope in stolen goods;
though your riches increase, do not set your heart on them.*

¹¹ One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard:

“Power belongs to you, God,

¹² and with you, Lord, is unfailing love”;

and, “You reward everyone according to what they have done.”



A Time for Reflection

When God Speaks :

What do we hear, are we even listening ?



Good morning,

In our Reflection this morning, I have once again turned to the Psalms which I have always felt to be a rich seem of inspired thought covering the means by which we come to understand the very nature and character of God Himself as well as revealing much about the nature of the Human condition, everything ranging from the highest accolade to the most critical and damning of observations. The Psalms of course have held a high place in the tradition of the Church in Scotland where they became the sole means of appropriate church worship. While most of the other mainstream Christian Denominations, have made the leap into more diverse worship, it has only been in the last Decade or so that the Free Church of Scotland have finally moved away from this whilst also allowing the use of musical instruments for the purpose of Worship, a truly revolutionary step for them.

The great temptation throughout these weeks and months since March last year has been to just stay within the book of the Psalms ignoring the richness of God's Word elsewhere in the Old and New Testament. This Sunday however, we return to visit the psalms and in particular Psalm 62 which I hope will leave us with a number of thoughts that we can be encouraged in, challenged by and reassured from. A Wise elder of my home church many years ago said that it was always important to understand the context of what was written in God's Word and that may be particularly important for us when it comes to the reading of Psalm 62.

An American preacher Stephen J Cole, sets the scene for us nicely when in a sermon to his congregation on California said this,

"In 1777, Dr. William Dodd, a London clergyman, was condemned to be hanged for forgery. When his last sermon, delivered in prison, was published, a friend commented to Samuel Johnson that the effort was far better than he had thought the man capable of. Dr.

Johnson replied, "Depend upon it, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully."

The difficulty with applying Psalm 62 is that very few of us have ever been in the desperate straits that David was in and so we cannot truly relate to what he says here. Evil men were threatening David's life and scheming how, not only to topple him as king, but also how to kill him.

A few times in the past 32 years, people have tried to get me fired. But I've always joked to Marla, "At least they're only after my job. So far no one has threatened my life!" But they were trying to murder David. They were saying, "He's like a leaning wall or tottering fence. Just push and he'll go down!" Under that real threat of death, David's mind was wonderfully concentrated to write this psalm. "

When you think about it the problems of the Machiavellian Assassination is not something that we are quite offay with these days. Our Sovereign, Queen Elizabeth II, does not have to worry about these things in these days. Probably the turmoil of American politics is the nearest we have come to see such things come to pass ... nearly.

In Psalm 62, we read how King David is clearly under threat not just to have a night of the long knives for one's political career but for his life. I am sure that with King David's life under threat and Dr William Dodd about to be hanged for his crimes, that their minds indeed, were truly and 'Wonderfully Concentrated'. What can we learn from Psalm 62? In answer, I think there are 4 simple thoughts to realise.

Firstly that in times of crisis, concern and worry, **the Soul Can Rest in God Alone (Verse 1)**. Being in a place of imminent threat does tend to focus the mind. David could have been concerned with ensuring that his security was 100% protected. He could have been launching a scathing investigation of his court to see who he can trust and who he can't. In this stressful and uncertain time we read the one thing he could be certain of was the relationship that He enjoyed with his Heavenly Father and so verse 1 begins the psalm in a very affirming way - "**My Soul Rests in God Alone**". In the uncertainty and stress of these times, locked in for fear of contracting a life threatening illness, unsure of who you can meet up and not get a fine for having done so or be fearful about where you can go and know that you will be safe from infection. For some of us as we get older, we lose confidence in being able to go out, some even speak of not having her same confidence they once enjoyed in the work place. Whatever challenges we face, the confidence of the Psalmist is one for us to take on board - our souls can rest in the love of God our Father and his love grace upon us.

The Second thing that we can take from the Psalm is found in Verse 5;

Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him. In times where we find there is enormous concern about the mental health of the nation particularly in relation to conditions of Depression, etc. Many have found this a truly uncertain time and you can understand why. Rightly so, many health and social care professionals have been offered counselling given the enormous loss of life they have had to deal with in these unpredictable times of this awful health crisis. For others as they see jobs lost, loved ones become ill and sadly all too often many, all too many, have become part of that large circle of people across the nations of the UK who have seen loved ones lost to this illness. What hope is there to offer in all this? Can Christian Faith have something to contribute? Well, I believe that Christian Faith can offer hope and that even just having hope itself offers something to hold on to. The Hope that God understands what we are going through, the hope that God is a consistency for us when everything else around us is in a state uncertain flux, the Hope that God in his goodness can fulfil the promises of God's Word to us, the hope that God can do what no-one else can, - take us through the very door of Death itself.

**"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
(Psalm 23:4)**

Thirdly, **Our souls can rest in God As we Trust in Him.**

*"Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge. (Ps 62: 8)*

Who does King David trust in his circumstances? Will they tell him what he needs to hear or only what he wants to hear? The former President of the United States, Donald Trump, in the 4 years of his Presidency, was constantly changing people in office. I do not remember hearing of a President in the United States before him having such a high turnover of staff. I have often wondered to myself - who did he Trust? That's not just the story of Presidents and Monarchs however. Doctors, lawyers and ministers are among some of the great professions for whom the issue of being able to trust them for their confidentiality is a must and when that trust is broken their credibility is very often difficult to restore. It goes further than that though. The closest Friendship and relationships are built on trust. I wonder how many marriages have faltered as a consequence of the failure of one or both to maintain their trust and have trust in their other half. Even if there is a circumstance that you feel you could not unburden yourself to the person you have loved, there is

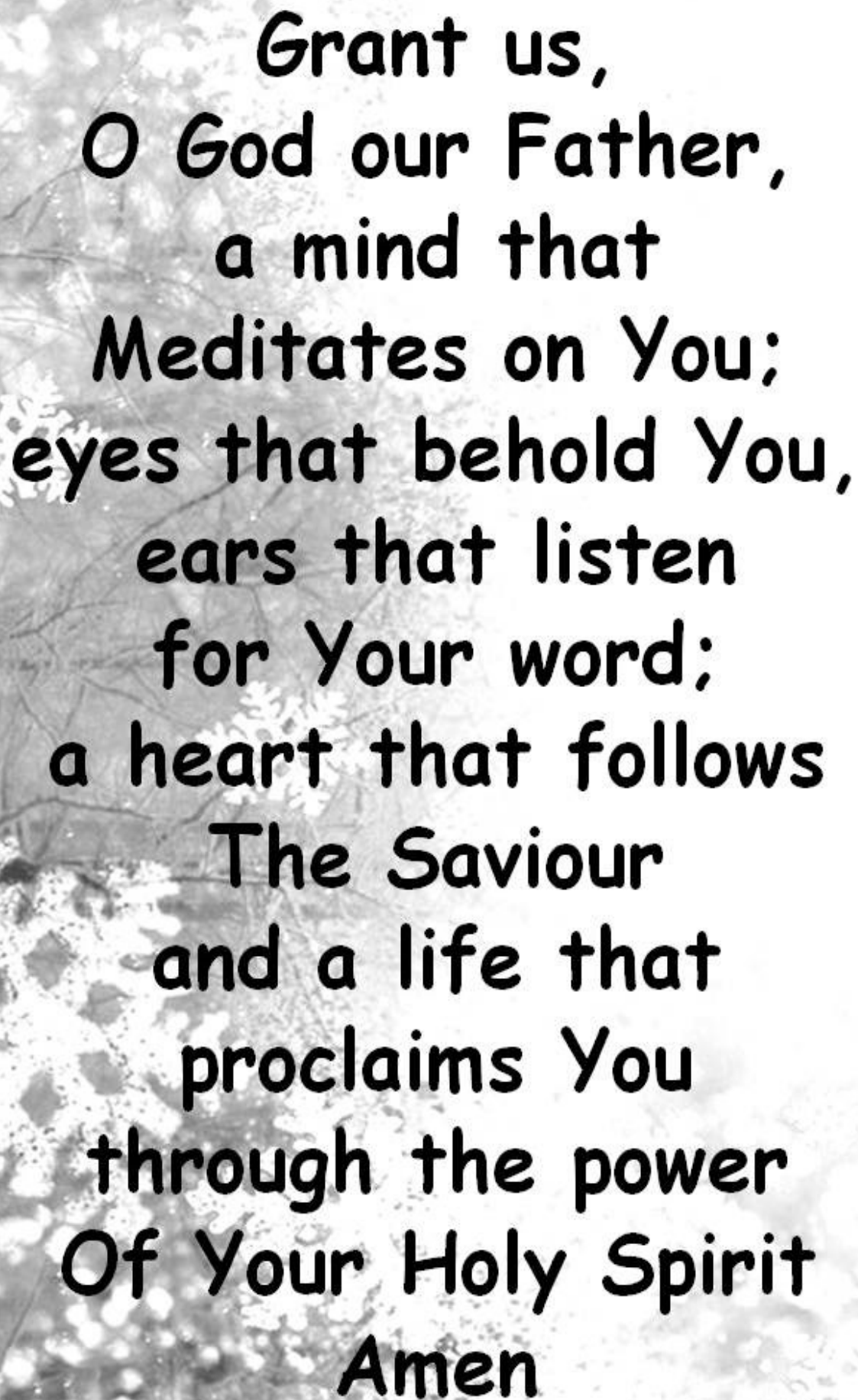
one to whom you can go and who will never break that trust with You. God our Father is one in whom you can do as the Psalmist King David suggests, to "pour out your hearts to him". He will never breach that trust - why? Because in Him You can depend, you can trust and you can have faith.

Finally, in the penultimate verse we read - "**One thing God has spoken, two things I have heard...**", our Soul can listen for His Voice. The psalmist writes of how in listening for God to speak, he heard two things, that God is all powerful and that his love is unfailing and he concludes that God has the capacity to judge fairly - something that we should and can be reassured by. How do we hear God's Voice in these times that we live? Classically, we can see God speak to us through the life and teaching of His Son Jesus which is why the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are so important. The follow on of that is of course the assuredness of the Old and New Testament as a whole to offer something of the voice of God for us to heed - that's why we call it God's Word after all. The input of the very Spirit of God himself is not to be undermined, Paul the apostle and other writers of those moments when he will speak to our hearts directly in what he called a Word of Knowledge and Prophecy. The life of the Church across the years and centuries as well as the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ all are means by which God has spoken to us. There has always been the still small voice of God that can speak to our hearts too. There will be other means by which God continues to speak to us perhaps the most easily taken for granted is that precious gift of the Holy Spirit - Sanctified Common Sense. It is plain to see after all that you do not need to try murder first, to know that it's wrong - common sense tells you that already.

So there we have it for this week, in times of crisis and uncertainty, Rest in God, his power and his love. Place your Hope in God and set your trust in God knowing that He will speak to You.

Have a great week - God bless us all

Calum



**Grant us,
O God our Father,
a mind that
Meditates on You;
eyes that behold You,
ears that listen
for Your word;
a heart that follows
The Saviour
and a life that
proclaims You
through the power
Of Your Holy Spirit
Amen**