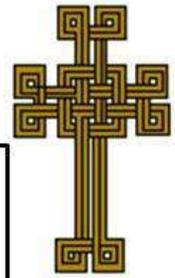


Giffnock: the Park Church



Sunday
10th January
2021

A JANUARY REFLECTION



Good morning,

BRRRRhh... Winter is truly upon us as if things were not problematic already. I look out my study window and there on the main road I see Snow ploughs gritting the roads morning noon and night or a farmer's tractor as they have been commissioned to supplement the number of Snow ploughs able to get around in these inclement driving conditions with the roads and our driveways becoming impassable. The temperatures fall, we crank up the central heating and if that's not enough get the candles out to enhance the heating of our rooms. Meanwhile the nation comes to a standstill with the flurry of a few centimetres of snow, our airports shut down and the villages are cut off.

Spare a thought though for those today who don't have what you have, a warm place for shelter, or who have not enough food on the table for their family, or for that elderly man or woman who has absolutely no-one to turn to.

I have to say that 2021 has not got off to the best of beginnings with new strains of the virus a worrying concern, lockdowns becoming more long term and severe with government indecision and actions coming too late seemingly causing frustration for all in different sectors of the economy and life ranging from dramatic shifts in education policy, early stage customs and border controls and most recently the quarantine of those coming to or leaving the UK via our airports or ports. As if that was not enough, the unimaginable scenes outside the Capitol Building in Washington DC where thousands stormed the centre of American Politics and ransacked the place. There seems little doubt that the current incumbent of the White House is responsible for inciting all of this to happen. He surely has proved himself to be a mad megalomaniac of a president who would be delighted if the people of the USA would just make him the first King of a new royal house of Trump and do away with their Constitutional Presidential System.

Meanwhile in the far east another lunatic and national leader wants more nuclear weapons to be made not less. Forgive my love of Cinema but in 1963 a comedy film was released starring none other than Spencer Tracy, Terry Thomas, Jimmy Durante and Mickey Rooney to name but a few, the film was of course "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World". I cannot help but think that in the years to come a film director will reuse this film title for another comedy film based on the year of 2020 and now 2021. If there was not such a serious loss of life entailed with all of this, it would almost be laughable and the comment might be, "You couldn't have made that up!"

It would appear that the only real good news on the Horizon is that of Vaccination - or is it? Some have said that when we read our bibles we should not be surprised to see things developing the way things have, that as Christianity has waned in influence and centrality to life in our late 20th and early 21st Century society, it can be hardly surprising that such chaos has ensued. I know that many today will be thinking that our best hopes for life rest in these new vaccines in order for life to become more normal again and there is no doubt that this is good news for us but there has always been over these past 2000 years or so the Hope of the Gospel, the good news on the horizon of a Father's Love, A Saviour's Sacrifice and a fulfilled promise of a relationship with God restored and a seat in the place of eternity with Him. No matter what happens that will be good news we can always hold on to. Isaac Watts, the hymn writer knew what he was talking about when he said,

**"O God our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come
A Shelter from the Stormy blast
And our eternal Home"**

Have a great week
Calum





*Prayer should be the key of the day
and the lock of the night.*

*George Herbert – 1593 – 1633
(Church of England clergyman and Poet)*

*“For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself
intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.”*

(Romans 8: 26)

Let us Pray,

Father in heaven as we gather before you now in the comfort of our own homes we seek Your presence once more resting on the confidence of your promise and the Hope of the Gospel. We thank you that there is not a time when you will neglect to hear our Prayer, there is not an issue that we will not be able to speak with you about and that we can come before you now seeking your grace upon us once more as we confess our needs and desires before You, expressing our confidence in You realising again your Majesty and Power at work within us.

Father we know that there have been times when our faith in You falters when we see everything around us collapsing in disarray. We know that there have been times when our confidence of belief has been shaken by events that have overtaken us and we have failed to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our Faith. Lord, forgive us for our unbelief and encourage us again to hold fast to the promise of Your Word.

Lord Jesus, you have set us an example to follow in how to conduct ourselves before others and before our Father in Heaven. You have demonstrated your Grace and mercy at work in our lives and the lives of others throughout the generations. Forgive us when we have found ourselves to be inconsistent in our Word and in our deeds and even in the mindset that we have brought to situations and our prayer to you now is that we be more like the Saviour who loved us and gave himself for us.

Spirit of God we pray that you would move in our hearts today, refreshing us in the warmth of our Father in Heaven's Love, enabling us to be more like You want us to be and less like we are. Your Word tells us of how you make intercession for us at times when words are not enough and so even

now we would seek to use these moments having sought our own needs met, to now look to have the needs of others brought before you.

So our Gracious God and precious Holy Spirit we pray for You to make your presence felt to those who are closest to us and to those who need you so much at this time.

We pray for those who grieve today, whose lives have been thrown into the place of distress and sorrow that death so often brings. We pray for your Peace to be upon them and they that are able to be sustained through these days to come as a funeral draws closer and after that day may they know that sense of Your comfort that helps them move forward from that day knowing you are a constant presence with them.

We pray for those in hospital at this time, patients and staff alike. With so much fear from risk of infection around, bring your healing touch and safe keeping for all this day. Be with those whose care is more long term and those who look after them.

We pray for all who need help in and around our community, those who are hungry, those who are homeless, those who are blighted by addiction in all its forms and those who are struggling with the all the restrictions this Pandemic has brought and its impact on our ability to cope. Be that source of Hidden strength we didn't realise was there, that sustaining presence to help us through.

We lift all those who are nearest and dearest to us, those who are our part of our family, those who are our closest friends, those who are our Brothers and Sisters in Christ, draw near them and us we pray as we give thanks to you once more for the week that we have come through and look ahead to the week that we face.

Draw near to us all Gracious God we pray, as we seek to draw near to You in Jesus Name.

Amen

The Gospel according to
LUKE
Chapter 5: verse 17-26

Luke 5:17-26

New International Version

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

¹⁷ One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. ¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. ¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven."

²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, "Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? ²⁴ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. ²⁶ Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

Please Remember a number of families and friends in Your Prayers at this time of sadness and sorrow for them



**Please Remember
The Family of
Mrs. Caroline Duff**

*Funeral Arrangements
are now in place for a
short private family
service at Linn
Crematorium
on Tuesday the 12th
January at 3pm*

*For further
information about
online streaming of the
service please speak
with the Minister*

**Please Remember
those who are the
close friends of
Miss Betty Carnie**

*Betty was one who
since coming to Park
Church was faithful in
her attendance at
church, who when
speaking with her,
demonstrated a quiet
but resolute and deep
sense of Faith in her
Saviour.*

*Please remember her
close Friend Myra
especially at this time.*

*This will be a private
service held in
Daldowie Crematorium
Monday 18th January
At 9.45pm.*

**Please Remember
all in the Family of
Mrs Margaret
McPhee**

*Funeral arrangements
have been made for a
service to take place on
Tuesday 19th January
At 4pm in Linn
Crematorium*

*For any further details
Please speak with the
minister*

A JANUARY

Sunday
10th January
2021



REFLECTION

Luke 5: 17-26

Hi Everyone,

Welcome to another reflection. For the first Twelve weeks of 2020 we were able to enjoy life as normal and then the story of Lockdown began. Now we are in the second Sunday of the 2021 and hopefully by the end of these first 12 weeks of the year we will begin to see things return to some normality again. One might even be tempted to see a certain symmetry in that way of thinking and our reflections have been running with that story since then and my thanks go to all those who have persistently continued to support our efforts to keep folks devotionally in Tune throughout that period and at the same time offer what must be accepted to be a poor man's second best to the real deal that is regular worship in church on a Sunday morning, with "the full bhoona" of hymns, prayers a children's address and of course , the sermon.

Today our written devotion does not align us quite so much with our video presentations based on Ephesians chapter One but instead takes us to the Gospel of Luke where we read there of Jesus great capacity for Healing which in today's world would possibly be looked upon with great suspicion and cynicism which I believe they do to their own detriment not fully understanding who it is they speak of, none other than the very Son of God Almighty Himself. I hope as we read of this great moment that we will find within these great words something that is an encouragement and affirmation of our faith in Jesus, who he was claimed to be by others but who also identified himself with these claims of being God's son and long awaited Messiah.

I don't know what you feel about Healing services, for some ministers it is a central part of their ministry, for others it is vitally central to their understanding of who Jesus is and claimed to be. Sadly for some ministers who have allowed unbelief or just plain and simple doubt to creep in they no longer believe this and see Jesus as a somewhat diminished version of who the Church traditionally claims him to be. While I have attended healing services in the past and have seen people unveil remarkable insights of their condition and offer remarkable prayer for the same souls seeking help,

I have to say however there have been none as humorous as the one told by a minister visiting an evangelism rally somewhere in the United States (I know what you are going to say - only in America) and with your indulgence I would like share that Story with you - it's called the Erotic Nerve and already I know that your interest has been peaked....

The Erotic Nerve

by John Clardy of Zachary: Louisiana

As an evangelist, I often visited special services or revivals at churches when I wasn't preaching at a service of my own. I do this to make contacts with new pastors as well as reconnecting with pastors I have known for a while who are also visiting to show their support for the host pastor and congregation.

On one such occasion I had been invited by a pastor in Louisiana to attend a special healing crusade that his church was hosting. The speaker for the crusade was a man known to be used in the Gifts of Healing and Miracles. It was to be a Friday, Saturday, Sunday crusade. I happened to have the Saturday evening available and decided to visit the crusade, but as it was quite a drive from my home, I arrived after the service had begun.

I could tell from the crowded parking lot that the building was filled to capacity and then some. People had come from near and far to have a variety of illnesses and ailments prayed for. I slipped in the back door and looked for a seat. I saw an empty chair that had been placed at the end of a pew to accompany the overflow crowd. I eased into the chair, nodded to the elderly gentleman that was sitting at the end of the pew and turned my attention to the service.

The church was in the midst of what you could only term an old fashioned testifying service. Different people would come to the front, face the congregation and testify to what the Lord had healed them of in the Friday evening service. I listened intently and appreciatively and offered an occasional Amen or Thank You Lord as did several others, including the elderly gentleman next to me. After listening to 3 or 4 testimonies, a middle aged man stepped to the microphone to give his testimony.

"Brothers and Sisters," he began, "I want to testify to the healing power of God! Last night many of you here saw me come up for prayer stooped over and in obvious pain. But, as you can see, tonight I am standing up straight without any pain! Praise God, He healed my erotic nerve!" He of course meant his sciatic nerve, but that made little difference. You could hear the unsuccessful attempts of many in the congregation trying to stifle laughs. I was doing pretty good at maintaining myself until the elderly

gentleman next to me added a further comment which had me laughing so hard I had to get up and leave.

The story of the men bringing their friend to Jesus with such determination no matter what, is among some of my favourite stories of Luke's Gospel. It is a story of with more serious ramifications than the previous story about 'the Erotic Nerve'. It is one of several accounts relayed in Luke's Gospel, all of which reflect Jesus capacity to bring real healing to a situation and I am sure that being a physician of the day himself, these accounts that he recorded for our benefit today were of particular interest to Luke. There are those who argue that his medical eye made him an excellent historian because of his attention to detail.

The last time we looked at this story of Jesus we saw the importance of the faith of the patient, the power of Jesus and the determination of his friends to see things through. Today as we reflect on these verses again, there are three things that we can note with interest.

The first to thing to see was how quickly the Pharisees and the Sadducees were to respond. Without even an examination of what they were seeing before them, they condemned Jesus for what he claimed he could do without even trying to understand what that meant. They were not interested in standing before the Messiah, they couldn't possibly acknowledge then that he was, even as a remote possibility, the one for whom the nation had been waiting for. Without examining the evidence before them, they made their determination that he was a Blasphemer, one was claiming that he was the Chosen One. Jesus, being one who had the very intuition of God himself, knows the heart of their thinking and challenges them in verse 21 to come clean and speak of their doubts before everyone to hear. Luke doesn't record what their response was, you are left with the distinct impression that at that point they may have left and that what follows next is for those who are left still in the house. Now that is an assumption I am making but it kind of feels right that things might have happened in this way.

The second thing that we can note from this is the question raised about Jesus ability to Heal. While Verse 21 speaks of Jesus knowing the hearts and minds of the Pharisees and Sadducees and verse 22 challenges them to be open about what is happening, Verse 23 I think speaks to those who are left behind. Having challenged Jesus Authority, they then challenged the Validity of his ability to Heal where that power and authority comes from. And so that other may see and believe who Jesus is, he links the power of his ability to heal with the ability to forgive sins, these great

misdemeanours that cause an affront not just to those around us but to the very person of God Almighty himself. Jesus does the unimaginable in these days declaring that one person's sins are forgiven, something that only the High Priest of the Temple at Jerusalem could do at one time in the year going in to the Holy of Holies to make restitution in his offering to God for the sins of the nation and not just this individual. But this Jesus had the temerity to forgive sins on an individual basis. You had to see this in one of two ways and that is seen in the reaction of those round about which brings me to the third thing to note.

The people responded to Jesus with, amazement and thanksgiving or fear, resentment and denial. There is no doubts that people must have been left utterly amazed at what they saw going on, Jesus' reputation perhaps preceding him and for those who saw him for the first time - he did not disappoint. The story however is not one of universal praise. Later in Luke chapter 5 Jesus is again in the company of Pharisees and Sadducees and this time they are critical because he spends time in the company of sinners, tax collectors and publicans and his reply must have warmed Luke's heart when he heard this story for the first time hearing of Jesus' reply,

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:31) Jesus spends time with not just the sinners, tax collectors and publicans, but spends time with Pharisees and Sadducees alike often in challenging discourse. They feared Jesus' growing power and influence, they resented his increasing popularity with the masses and they could not even begin to accept the possibility that He was who he Claimed to be.

People then are no different from people today. So many of us stand in awe and wonder of Jesus of Nazareth but there are so many more who are fearful, resentful and deny that Jesus is the Son of God, the uniqueness of his birth his life and even his death and resurrection will not be enough to persuade them otherwise . Perhaps God Word reminds best the outcome of all this

"Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— (John : 19)

Something for us all to ponder I hope.

Have a good week

Calum

Lord:

**In the midst of Winter, when the days are
cold and wind can pierce,
remind us of the warmth of your love.**

**In the midst of Winter, when days are short,
dawn comes late, and dusk arrives early,
remind us that in the darkness
your light still shines.**

**In the midst of Winter, when the flowers of
spring still lie hidden in the earth,
when leaves are off the trees,
and the world can seem bleak,
remind us that Easter is but a short time away.**

**And when in our lives we feel as if we are
experiencing a season of winter, reach out to us with
the power of your resurrection so that we may feel
the warmth of your love and see your light that
alone can take away the darkness of our soul.**

(A prayer by Cal Wick)

