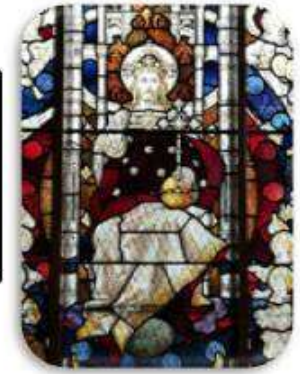




Giffnock: the Park Church
Sunday 6th June 2021
Sunday Devotional ; If only they knew



Good morning everyone,

A warm welcome (emphasising the Warm) to this week's Devotional and although we began a series of thoughts based on Colossians Chapter 3, as I am taking a Communion service over at St Christophers Priesthill and Nitshill Parish Church this morning in my role as Interim Moderator with the retirement of their minister, Rev Douglas Nicol, after 33 years in post, I am sure those who have attended our own Prayer and Reflection Service at Park Church will have been well served with Ann Smith dealing with things at our own end. This of course means that I will now be involved in the lives of 2 congregations for the foreseeable future until a new minister is appointed or the Presbytery decides to release me and appoint someone else. On a slightly different note, I can intimate that next Sunday will be a Communion Service, an event which we would normally host around this time of the Year.

This week we have seen some new updates in the Church of Scotland regarding news about the reinstatement of Congregational Worship. Should we in East Renfrewshire and elsewhere be able to step down from Tier 2 to Tier 1, then Sunday Morning Services will see the reinstatement of Congregational Singing and with that the probable removal of masks while seated. (At long last I hear you say.) All I can say in response to that is that having not been able to sing worshipfully for over 15 months now, that first Sunday together where we can Give God our thanks in that way that we have always loved, IT HAD BETTER BE GOOD !

The good news is that hopefully many of our organisations can once again use our halls, whether choirs, chess clubs, youth groups bowling clubs, even Board and Session meeting will once again be able to take place in person no longer requiring the dreaded Zoom Meeting.

Of course, we still have to come out of Tier 2 first and until then we continue as we have done to follow the good Social Distance practice that we have put in place. With this news on the horizon, i hope this week will be a good one for you and that as always, you keep healthy.

With best wishes

Calum D. Macdonald



A warm word of Welcome to Mrs Ann Smith who leads the service at Park Church this morning. Ann is not only one of our Church Members but is also a Lay Reader for the Church of Scotland and will be taking up an appointment as Locum where our own minister is leading Worship this morning beginning his role as Interim Moderator at St. Christophers, Priesthill and Nitshill Parish Church, Their minister Rev Douglas Nicol has just retired after 33 yrs there. Please remember them in Prayer.

**Congregational Board Meeting
Wed 9th June 2021 @ 7.30pm**

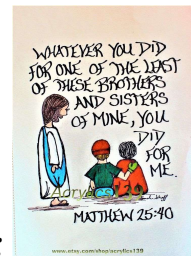
Elders and Board Members please note the details of the meeting scheduled this week. The Agenda & Minutes have been sent out and should be in one's Email inbox. I will forward the details for connecting to our Zoom Video Conference online by the Wednesday morning so that it is at the top of your inbox. I will look forward to seeing you there.



Carnwadric Church Foodbank Shopping List

UHT milk, Sugar, Coffee and Diluting Juice along with tinned products such as:- Tinned carrots or peas Custard, Rice pudding, Fruit, Spaghetti, Baked Beans, Soups plus **Tinned meals**: Mince, Stews, Hotdogs, Ham, Corned Beef, Ravioli, Mac & Cheese As well as Cleaning Products & Personal Hygiene Products. -

**A Big Thank You from all at the Foodbank Team
at Carnwadric Church.**





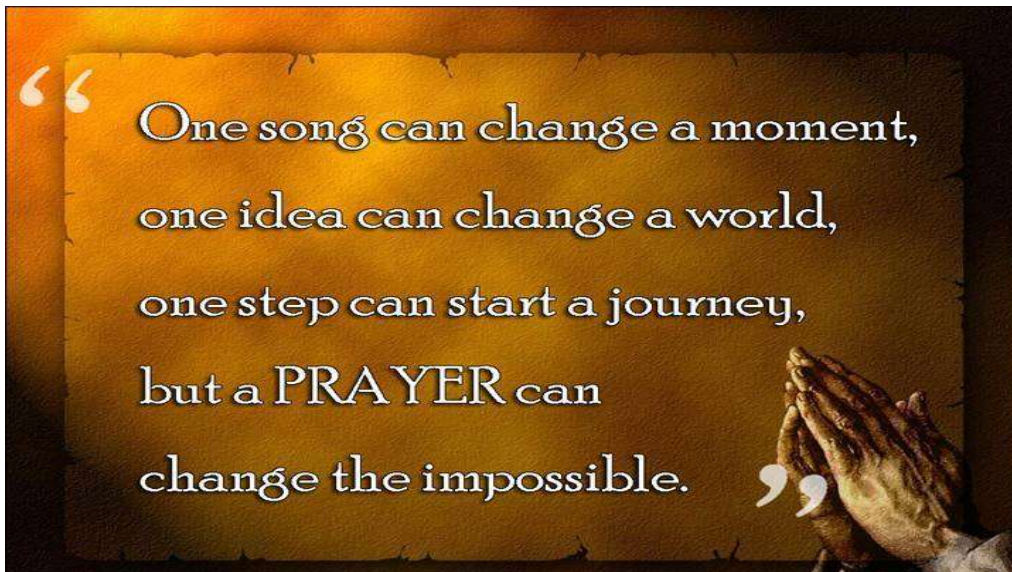
To prevent congestion at the Door and thus maintain Social Distance
Please give advanced notice of your intention to attend Church that
Sunday. This is very important and easy to do. Simply contact Bert
or Sandra Dickov on either 01413168143 or 07947611412
Although in Tier 2 of the Lockdown Protocol, please remember to follow
the one way system in place, social distance, sanitisation, wearing a mask,
etc for everyone's safety.



Sacrament of Communion

*A Celebration in the Sacrament of the Lord's
Supper will take place on Sunday 13th June
2021 at 11am in Park Church.*

*You need only bring yourselves to what I trust
will be a joyous occasion.*



¹⁶Rejoice always, ¹⁷pray continually, ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

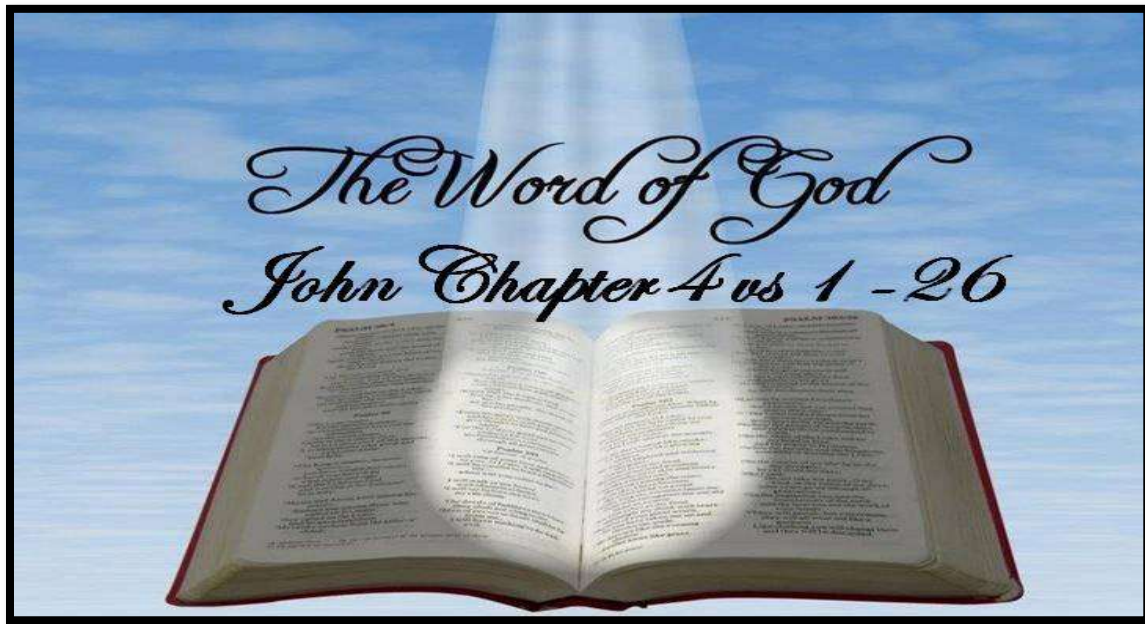
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Let us pray....

Heavenly Father, We thank you this day for the opportunity to still our hearts and focus again on your great love for us. You are the one who calls us to be a chosen people, a living sacrifice, a holy nation. You are the one who calls us to be a light in this world of darkness, you call us to be People of Faith, people of praise and people of service, following the blessed example of our Lord Jesus. Whether in church or at home we simply ask that in the stillness of our thoughts here and now that we would be like the Psalmist who knew to 'be still and Know that You are God,' the maker of the Heavens and the Earth.

Father in Heaven we also know that You are the one, who forgives and Your Son Jesus, having been the only solution for the problem of our sin, took the burden of our shame and our punishment on himself, that we might be restored to you. We recognise that there is nothing we can do in our own strength that fully justifies us before you, and that it is our faith and trust in Jesus alone, that brings us back into fellowship with You.

Father in Heaven we know that as we have committed our lives to you, You have called us to Serve and so we offer the skills we have, the finance we can bring, and the time we can devote to You and Pray that your Holy Spirit would move in our hearts this day that we might serve You. Help us be true to our faith in Jesus, consistent in our walk of faith, lead us in the strength of Your Holy Spirit, may he inspire us, challenge us, Change us, and Convict us for your Glory, for all this we pray in Jesus' name ... Amen



John 4:1-15

Jesus Talks With a Samaritan Woman

4 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³ So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

4 Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.^[a])

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our

father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

¹³ Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

¹⁵ The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.”

¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— ¹⁷ the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be^[a] in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. ²⁰ On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹ Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them.”

²² Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, “But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?”

²³ Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

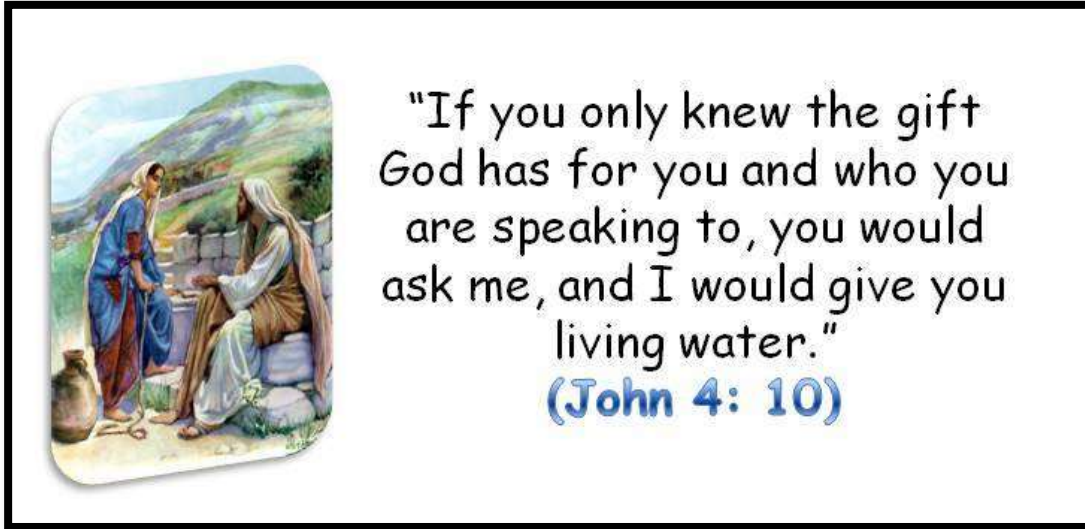
²⁵ “All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Church Mice

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Some thoughts for Reflection



Welcome to another written reflection as we consider once again the goodness of God whilst in these troubled and strange times for us here in Scotland as well as across the world today. For our thinking this morning I thought we might consider these words from John Chapter 4 where we read the well known story of Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well. I have always felt this to be a remarkably contemporary story in the way that it opens a conversation about how we deal with Cultural Difference and Social Bias, how it confronts the issues of marriage today and people's attitudes towards it. More critically of course it looks at the things of eternity and the consequences of our responses to God and his Call upon our lives.

In Chapter 3 of John's Gospel, Jesus Having had a conversation with the Pharisee Nicodemus in the darkness of night so that no one would see them together, demonstrates to this righteous Jewish man, that God's love is much broader than just for the people of Israel. He reminds Nicodemus that Jesus came because God loved the world so much that He gave his one and only son, a statement indicating God's wider intent for the World and not just the people of Israel and that the place of faith in all this is central and not just slavish obedience to the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament. I find it significant in the very next chapter John writes, we are presented with this story of a Samaritan Woman with Jesus.

The Hatred between Jews and Samaritans has been both fierce and long-standing. In some ways, it is understood to have dated all the way back to the days of Jacob and his twelve sons, whose descendants would become the twelve tribes of Israel. You will remember from Sunday school days how Joseph, his favourite son, despised by his brothers is sold into slavery and that by God's intervention his life was spared and ultimately saved this fledgling nation. Before his death, Jacob gave Joseph his blessing in which he called him a "fruitful bough by a particular well - what became known as Joseph's Well, the same well that now Jesus sits beside having a conversation with the Samaritan Woman. The two tribes led by Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, would hold the fertile land that eventually became Samaria. As time wore on Israel would divide into two kingdoms where the Northern kingdom, called Israel, would establish its capital first at Shechem and later at the hilltop city of Samaria.

By 722 B.C. the Assyrians had conquered Israel taking most of its people into captivity. These invaders then brought Gentile colonists in from across the empire to resettle the land. These foreigners brought with them their pagan idols, which the remaining Jews began to worship them along with the God of Israel while Intermarriages becoming very commonplace muddying the waters of religious life and practice.

Meanwhile, the southern kingdom of Judah fell to the Babylonians in 600 B.C. and its people too were carried off into captivity. But 70 years later, a remnant of 43,000 during the time of Nehemiah the Prophet was permitted to return and rebuild Jerusalem. The people who now inhabited the former northern kingdom—the Samaritans—vigorously opposed such repatriation and tried to undermine attempts to re-establish the nation.

The tension between Jew and Samaritan thus became much more prominent as the full-blooded, monotheistic Jews detested the mixed marriages and worship of their northern cousins and so the walls of bitterness and hatred were erected on both sides and such enmity just hardened over the next 550 years.

By the time of Jesus, although the route from Jerusalem to Galilee was shorter through Samaria, most Jews in Jesus' time would often take the longer route for several reasons, one being that they didn't want to sully themselves becoming unclean by coming into contact with Samaritans. Another reason may simply be that given the tensions they didn't want to risk their lives as the distrust between them meant violent reaction was never far from the surface.

I trust you will forgive that race through history but it sets the tone for this meeting between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman whose name we never get to know. She is just, "the Woman at the well" and yet that meeting is a critical one for our understanding of who the Gospel applies to no matter who we are or what we have done. John Chapter 4 and verse 10 reveals three things for us to consider

today in how Jesus drew this woman into a conversation, making her curious about several things:-

a) He made her curious about the things of God.

(If only you knew the gift of God.)

b) He made her curious about who Jesus is (**who it is who says to you**).

c) He made her curious about what He could give her,

(He would have given you living water.)

He made her curious about the things of God.

An innocent question asking for a drink of Water from this woman who had also come to Jacob's Well was surprising. For any self respecting Jew to even speak to a Samaritan was something that would be for the most part unheard of. Taking a drink from someone like that would have been even more unusual.

And yet this is what Jesus often does to challenge the social niceties (or the not so social niceties). Taken aback that this man would even sit near to her much less speak with her, sparks a conversation about the things of eternity.

Whenever I read this story, I cannot help but think of the words of a song written by Keith Green who in the opening verses asks the question,

"How can they live without Jesus?

How can they live without God's Love?

How can they feel so at home down here

When there's so much more up above?"

Jesus said to the woman at the Well, "If Only you knew the gift of God..." If only people could realise the gift that God offers in all its breadth and grace and love. So many today will look on the need for God's Saving Grace as something that they don't need to think about today. There was a minister who told me of an aunt of his who having come from very humble beginnings would, as time wore on, meet a man with whom she would fall in love and subsequently marry. Over the years they would do very well for themselves becoming very well off and socially enjoying the company of those and such as those. While she had been brought up in a Christian Home, her husband had never been involved in the church and had no intention of being involved in the church and she too fell into such ways. For her the song, "Let the good times roll" was a song she would happily sing but over time her husband died and as she reached the later years of life, she too became unwell, terminally so. Her nephew in conversation at one point tried sensitively to get her to consider how she might begin to put her affairs into order, even her eternal affairs, but that conversation was very quickly and angrily shut down. The minister looking back, often wondered whether his aunt had ever put her "Eternal Affairs" into order as it was a conversation never to be had again with her.

There are so many today who are so unwilling to consider the eternal gift that God Offers and one can begin to understand why Jesus phrased the comment in

such a way... If only you knew the Gift of God. The cry of all in the church today needs to be ... "if only you knew" because there are many today who either don't think it matters when it clearly does. There are many today who think it's in the bag already and don't need to think about it and haven't realised they need to confront their need of God's Grace and Mercy through repentance and faith in their lives, even their eternal lives.

He made her curious about who Jesus is

"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink"

The second part of the conversation considers the question of Who Jesus was. Like the disciples being asked, "Who do men say I am?" (Matt 16:13), the woman at the well is left with a question as to who it that stands before her. This has proved to be one of the great questions across the centuries with scholars and clergyman and writers along with the early Church Fathers.

Ultimately that question can only be answered by themselves for themselves.

As young man I used to attend a midweek praise evening with friends from church where the singing was great and finished with short epilogue/sermon. One of the songs we sang had these lyrics.

**"Some folks may ask me, Some folks may say,
Who is this Jesus that you talk about every day?
He is my Saviour, He set me free.
Now listen while I tell you, what He means to me**

Chorus

**He is my everything, He is my all.
He is my everything, both great and small.
He gave his life for me, made everything new
He is my everything, Now how about you?**

We could examine the proofs for Jesus' life, the arguments for his Deity and whether the text of God's Word is reliable. Ultimately the proof in the pudding of all this will only come to fruition on the other side of death's door.

The story of Faith in the Saviour is ultimately all that we have and all that we can offer to others. By the closing verses of our Reading there is a dawning moment of realisation beginning for the Woman at the Well when she begins to speak of the promised Messiah. And Jesus in one of these rare moments in the Gospels, confirms the woman's suspicions when He says, "I am He of whom you Speak!" (John 4:26)

For many today this Jesus of Nazareth is one who along with his Father in heaven is a means of cursing others. He is one who others today would say has no bearing on modern day life. There are even some who would deny his existence at all not realising there is more historical material to prove the real life existence of Jesus of Nazareth than there is for the life of Julius Caesar, the founder of the

Roman Empire, yet strangely no-one declares it likely that Julius Caesar is only a myth and not a real person of History. If Jesus is a real person of History, then we have to confront the possibility that maybe just maybe Jesus is who he claims to be. John 4:26 affirms the claims about Jesus - "I am He of Whom you Speak!"

He made her curious about what He could give her (Living Water)

Verse 10 speaks not just about the offer of a gift from God not just about who it is that offers such a gift, but what the gift is - Living Water. What on earth could Jesus have meant by such a strange comment.

Everyone in that part of the world understood all too clearly the value of Water for life itself. You needed to know where to go for water. You needed to know once you got there where and how you might find Water because otherwise the heated and dry, dusty sandy environment of that part of the Middle East could be a very short lived experience for you.

Scholars and men and women of faith across the generations and even centuries have come to realise these words in metaphoric or allegorical terms. As water is vital for continued life, so too is the Grace the Mercy and Peace of God, found vitally in the place of Faith in the Saviour. Like the parched individual drawing life giving water from Jacob's Well is able to find that it refreshes and comforts, revives and cheers the body, so too this living Water that Jesus speaks of comforts, revives and cheers the soul. In the same way that rivers of water in a dry land help maintain and support life around it, this Living Water Jesus Spoke of maintains and supports the spiritual life of the soul, it is ever abiding, and continuing, springing up even to everlasting life. Unlike water that becomes still and stagnant killing life off, such 'Living Waters' are thought to be always flowing, and never ceasing and in that image there is a sense of how we might understand the nature and capacity of the Love of God himself - ever flowing never ceasing, able to comfort, revive and cheer the soul.

Surely that is something wonderfully reassuring for those who have faith and something for those of no faith, it is something wonderful to wish for.

Have a great Week

Calum

May the Strength of God
pilot us.

May the Power of God
preserve us.

May the Wisdom of God
instruct us.

May the Hand of God
protect us.

May the Way of God
direct us.

May the Blessing of Father,
Son and Spirit always be
with us

