



Welcome to another Sunday Devotional.

Having coming through the month of January, that time of the year when so many will be asking the question - 'Why is there so much month left at the end of the money?'. The month of February is shaping up to be equally turbulent. I trust you have been able to enjoy as best you can the mix of mild winter weather with the stormy breaks coming off the Atlantic Ocean currently hitting our shorelines.

It would appear however that this is not the only storm to hit our shores in recent times. With rising utility bills and food prices, there has also been the story of the many who have been left without power to heat their homes for a protracted period while some have even been decanted from their homes for safety. Then of course there is the current storm of Westminster politics and perhaps the less said about that, the better. Covid is still on the rampage with people still fearful of going out while the arguments about whether to vaccinate or not still predominate. Meanwhile tensions continue to rise over the Ukraine in Eastern Europe with troop deployments building up on all sides of a number of borders and the fear of serious conflict in Europe since the second world war - it is a worry. Meanwhile across the other side of the world, there are other nations rattling their sabres while various people in different parts of the world suffer from hunger and hypothermia, persecution and maltreatment and I am left thinking that the movie director Stanley Kramer made the right decision to title his 1963 film - It's a mad mad mad world.

At a time where there is such uncertainty and a sense of things destabilising all over, many are asking - where is the hope in these times where laws that are passed seem to be ineffectual or seem irrelevant and easily broken, where systems of care and societal norms seem to be breaking down? One Christian songwriter suggests that now more than ever people need to have the hope of Heaven in the real World that we might have something to cling onto while all around seems to be breaking down. The theme of our Devotional this month is exploring how we can see the radical teaching of Jesus help us to see another way of living that honours God and others first before ourselves and I hope you will find encouragement in the story of all this.

Every Blessing

Calum D. Macdonald

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENTS

*A warm welcome to worship
this morning as we gather
Round the Lord's Table
together in the Bond of
Faith.*

Church Diary
Monday
Craft Club, Eastwood Choral Society
McCarthy Dance School & Chess Club
Tuesday
Prayer Meeting, Mother & Toddlers,
Bible Study, Girl Guides
Wednesday
Mother & Toddlers & Brownies
Thursday
Indoor Bowls, Keep Fit
Friday
McCarthy Dance School
Saturday
Keep Fit
Sunday
Morning Worship

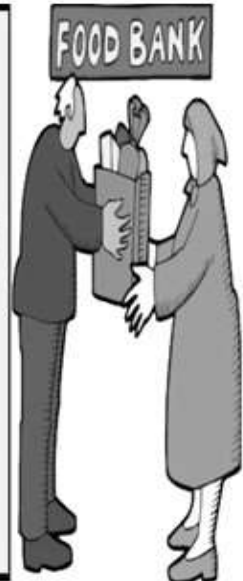
LIFE AND WORK

THE MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

The February
Edition
of Life & Work
is now available
to uplift from
the Church
Vestibule



Carnwadric Church Helping Hands Community Foodbank
As we say Good Bye to 2021 and Hello to 2022, the work of helping those in need continues and I want to thank everyone yet again - all who have been faithfully supportive of this important work where we are able to assist our neighbours and friends at Carnwadric Church as they help those whose needs are greater than ours.



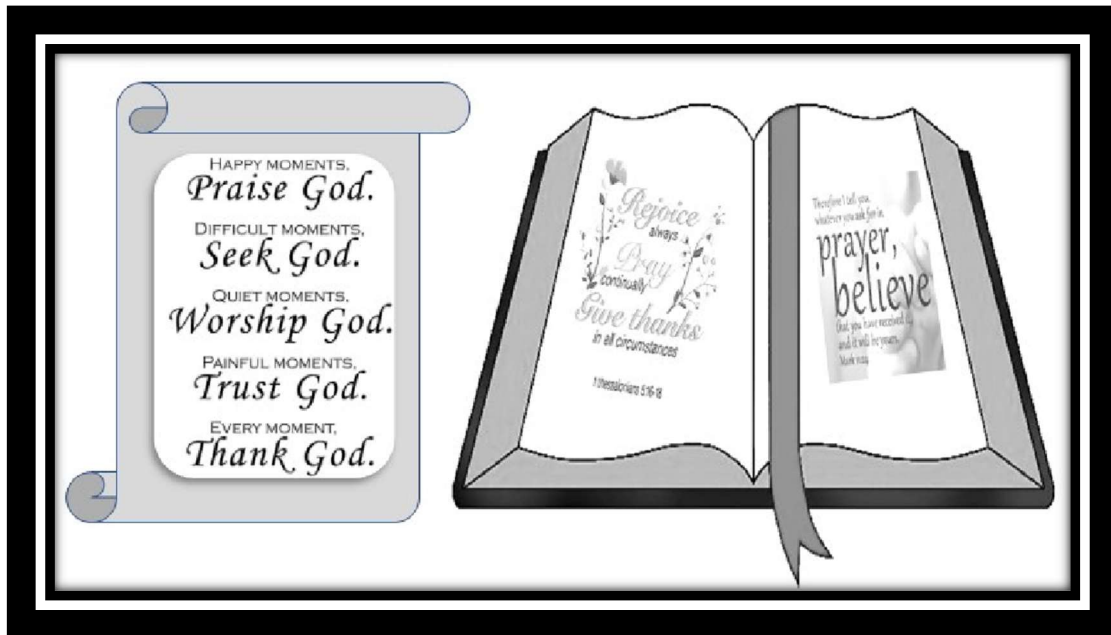
From Sunday 13th February onwards

JOIN US EACH WEEK
AFTER THE SERVICE
AS WE FELLOWSHIP
WITH ONE ANOTHER!



**Faith and Prayer
both are invisible
but they make
impossible things
possible !**

**Tuesday
mornings
from 10am
in the Session
house
The Powerhouse
of Prayer**



Let us Pray

Our Father in Heaven, we take this opportunity to thank You for the wonder and marvel of your great love for us, where we can offer our praise and thanks in our churches and in our homes. We seek to ascribe to You the glory and honour that is due to You as Father, Son and Spirit as we stand in awe and wonder for we can see that the Psalmist was truly right -You are God, our Creator, our Lord and our Saviour, and You alone are deserving of our worship. Your power and Your majesty can be seen throughout all the world, the works of Your hand displayed in the heavens above, in the earth beneath and in the waters across the earth. You sit enthroned in circle of the heavens as our eternal King, and Your footstool is the foundation of the earth, which You have made.

We acknowledge that your holiness leaves us with a desire for reverent praise, for Your grace and mercy, the sacrifice of Jesus, Your son and our Saviour has brought us to a place worthy of receiving your Blessing and Salvation through faith in Him who loved us and gave himself for us.

Gracious God we know there are things that we could have done better, the ways we have spoken of others or even to others, there have been times our actions have not always reflected your love and that even the mindset which we have had has not always brought you honour or glory. Forgive us and help us do better as we seek to honour you with our lives that we might serve you better in reaching out to others in Christ's name.

May we always seek your kingdom first that we may be that lighthouse beacon of your love to a broken fallen world and in so doing, may we bring you glory and honour in all we say and do in Jesus' name

Amen



Luke 6: :27 -36

Love for Enemies

²⁷ *“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

³² *“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that.*

³⁴ *And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

Sunday 6th February 2022



*Giffnock:
The Park
Church*



The Sunday Devotional

Learning to Love those who don't love you back

As we have begun to meet up in church again in the new year with restrictions beginning slowly to ease up, we have been able to begin a new series of Bible Studies based on the three chapters of Matthew's Gospel better known as the Sermon on the Mount. We began by looking at the best known verses of the sermon - Jesus' Great teaching on the Beatitudes.

I thought for our Devotional that we might take a similar tack but instead of reviewing the great teaching of Matthew Chapters 5-7 we might reflect on the great words of Luke 6: 27-36, words often referred to as being part of the great Sermon on the Plain.

Scholars have often debated these two great moments of Jesus' teaching, some arguing that this is the same sermon set in two different locations to reach two different audiences, adapted accordingly but still having a considerable similarity in both gospel accounts and that Matthew writes his gospel account for a Hebrew readership where the setting of Luke's readership is that of the Gentile world having been the companion of the Apostle Paul on his missionary Journey.

Personally, I favour the idea that this is in fact two separate sermons set in two separate occasions. As a minister, I know the value of being able to use material from one sermon and applying it to a sermon for a different audience or a different occasion. While there are great similarities in Matthew and Luke, it seems to me there are sufficient differences to argue that these were two different audiences that Jesus spoke to. One of the simplest pieces of evidence being that the setting of one sermon differs markedly from the other being on the side of a mountain while the other is on the Plain. The contents of the sermons have also sufficient difference in terms of material and it strikes me that Jesus had a wee bit less to say to those on the Plain than was said on the Mount.

Whatever the truth of this is, the critical thing is to treasure what Jesus said on both occasions. So much of what we read in Matthew and Luke is radical in terms of aim and intention and when we read Luke's Account and these verses that are part of that great sermon, we can begin to see just how radical Jesus could be at times. I have titled the Devotional for today - 'Learning To Love Those Who do not Love You Back'. And right from the beginning of our reading, Jesus teaching remains singularly unique.

Set in the early stages of his ministry Jesus looks to set a very different tone. Many of his contemporaries of the day would have sought to gain the support of the people by rallying them to the cause of freedom from Roman oppression. At no point in the three years of Jesus' ministry however does he ever advocate such action. Indeed, he seeks that the Christian, should do the unexpected and even the opposite. All this brings us to the thoughts raised from the text for our consideration which can be best summed up as: -

- a) Learning to Love our enemies
- b) Being a Blessing to others who don't like us
- c) Being generous to others
- d) Making sure our mindset is the right one

So, Let's explore these radical ideas, the first being to learn to love our enemies. Jesus said, *"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,"*. One of the things that strikes me is how this would sit better in Matthew's Gospel rather than that of Luke, as Matthew was by profession one of the most vilified and hated of individuals, a tax collector, the equivalent of the American Civil War carpetbaggers who sought to capitalise on the success of the Romans by being the ones tasked with raising the taxes for Caesar while as a side-line fleecing those under occupation. Jesus recognised just how easy it is to hate. Politicians have used that truth to such great effect. The sad events of January 6th a year ago when Donald Trump having lost the election to be President, used the hatred of others to very nearly succeed in a coup d'état of the United States electoral process. Here in the UK at the height of what those in Northern Ireland referred to as 'the Troubles' saw the religious difference of catholic and protestant manipulated to feed the hatred of others in direct contravention of the command of the risen Jesus to the church - "Love one another As I have loved You," with the impact that the division between Roman Catholic and Protestant communities is never far from the surface a lesson I learned very readily in my time as minister in Saltcoats and even in Giffnock. Jesus realised that the harder thing to do in these circumstances is actually move past the hatred and care for others meaningfully.

The central call of the Christian has always been to rise to the higher ideal that if God can deign to love you and me, we can, in response to that love, learn to do likewise and love others even those who are the most difficult to love at times. Is there a member of your family or church family who drives you crazy, the call to you and me is that We love them unconditionally just like our Father in Heaven loves us.

The Second radical thought of Luke 6's sermon on the plain is that we not only love our enemies but that we learn to be a blessing to others, even those who are our enemies. (*"bless those who curse you"* - verse 28) The Higher ideal again as before is to rise above our first inclination. I remember having a conversation with one of my colleagues in the hospital laboratory where we were talking about taking hold of opportunity to rise up the corporate ladder and how ruthless one needs to be and I have never forgotten what he said.

"If ye cannae kick a man when he is down ye'll never kick him when he is up". This is exactly what Jesus was pushing against. There is nothing good in revenge it tends to feed the bitterness and never fully satisfy it. My time in Uganda taught me a wee bit about this when I was learning about how they try to get child soldiers to be reconciled with their families and villages having committed the very worst of atrocities and yet there was a liberation for not just the aggressor but for the one who suffered at the hands of the aggressor in seeking to bless others with forgiveness and grace.

The remarkable Dutch Christian lady Corrie Ten Boom, who along with her father and sister, sought to assist Jewish families escape from Nazi persecution was eventually arrested and sent to the Death Camps. Years later she met a man who had not long come to faith, a man who she recognised very quickly as one of the Camp Guards. Having been the sole survivor in her family of these awful Death Camps that took the lives of so many, you might think she would have been perfectly justified in turning her back on him and walking away, but she didn't. Instead she took him by the hand and welcomed him as her brother in Christ. She had clearly understood these principles enshrined in Luke chapter 6 espousing the higher ideal of not just loving one another but loving one's enemies and blessing them rather than cursing them. If the previous thoughts were hard enough the third premise of *"praying for those who mistreat you"* is no less important. It has been drummed in from when we were young how important prayer was and that it remains a primary tool in the toolbox of the Christian. It is only natural that if we can learn to love our enemies and bless those who curse us that we can easily find the means to pray for them. At the heart of Christian living there is the central ministry of praying for others, something we can all do regardless of age or

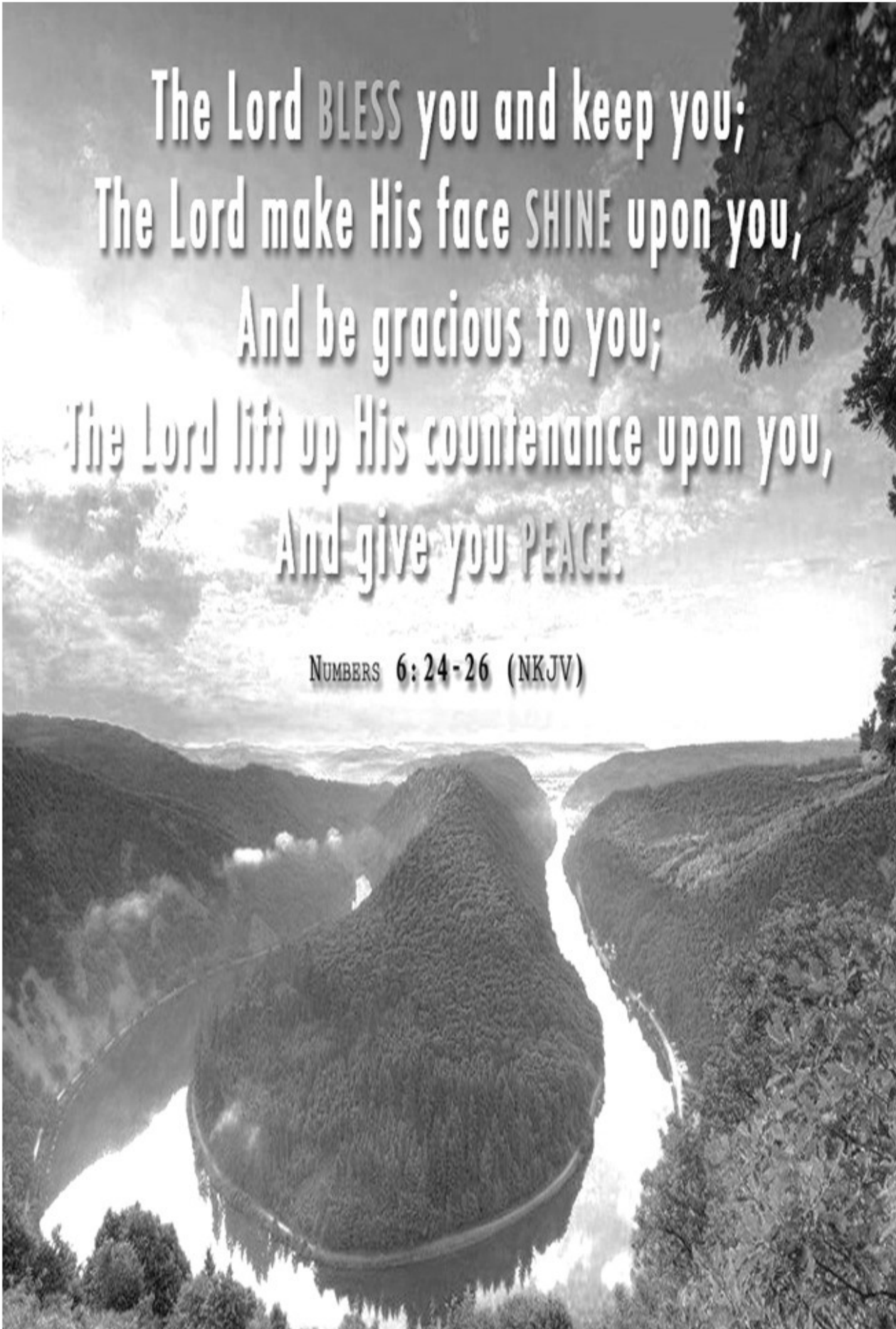
circumstance. As Glasgow Street Pastors begins patrolling the City Centre and West End streets for the first time in 2022, as the Safe Zone Pastors based at St Georges Tron Church look after those who are in their care, not one of us would take for granted the work of those who pray for us throughout the night till we all get home safely ourselves. Prayer should always be the Court of First appeal before God. Sadly, for many, it is the last. The Christian's Call is to "**pray continually**" (1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18)

Jesus Radical Teaching moment does not stop here. There is a further mandate for us to take on board and that is - *Generosity to Others*. Not only are we to love our enemies, bless those who curse us and pray for them but that we learn to be generous towards them. (Verse 30) there have been those who I have met, those who I have heard on the news or read of in news reports who have taken the notion that no-one is entitled to have what they earned for themselves be it in terms of a government that demands taxes or those other areas we refer to as charitable giving. It is not my or any other minister's business to tell anyone how they should be generous but it is important for the principle of being generous to be upheld. If God our Father in Heaven has been generous to us in much, He expects us to be generous in more than a little.

Our final thought from Luke this day is that of making sure our mindset is a Right one. I think and it is stating the plain old fashioned obvious that when we come to things with the right attitude and mindset then everything else falls into place. It will never feel right in our sense of *Giving* if our heart is not in it. Blessing those who curse us is just not going to feel right if the mind set that we come with is that of *I'll forgive but not forget*. The mindset that we bring will impact our sense of generosity, it will certainly impact our desire to pray for others and our ability to be gracious to others in blessing them and loving them as Christ loves us, I'm stating the obvious here but sometimes we need to have these things pointed out to us again and again before it sinks in.

In summary we are to follow through the second greatest command to love one another as Christ loved us in how we love others, how we bless them, pray for them, be generous towards them and come always with the right attitude of mind. Some food for thought for us all and may God Bless us all as we consider these things.

Calum



The Lord BLESS you and keep you;
The Lord make His face SHINE upon you,
And be gracious to you;
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,
And give you PEACE.

NUMBERS 6: 24-26 (NKJV)