

# *Giffnock : the Park Church*



*Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2022*

Good morning,

Welcome to another Sunday Devotional as we adjust from the time of Spring looking forward to summer days and nights with the hope and optimism of seeing us as coming through the challenges of coping with Covid, able once again to enjoy the simple freedoms that we once took so easily for granted. A new set of Challenges now beset us as we go forward into this brave new world, a world of rising inflation and household bills, political tensions domestically and internationally with the threats of wider conflict across Europe for the first time since VE Day in 1945 as in Ukraine the dreadful cost of War continues to remind us what makes such a thing so awful in terms of cost in lives lost, lives damaged and/or displaced to other countries while the threats abound of even nuclear conflict being a reality. It is truly a challenging time.

For the Church it doesn't end there because while all this is going on in the world around us, the dawning impact of these past 2yrs has seen the church nationally take some radical steps as they worry about the capacity of Congregations to recover from all that has happened over that period. A large number of Ministers about to retire creating a void in ministry, congregations across the country struggling to revive congregational attendance on Sunday mornings and re-establish a community presence within their locale. Financial recovery and financial futures a significant concern behind the backdrop of all this and the cry will go up in all this - Where is God in the story of all this?

Wilma and I have always held to God's promise of the Old Testament from the very beginning of our marriage. Those pressures and difficulties of life that on occasion have daunted us, those times been where the future is unclear, the way forward uncertain. Jeremiah 29:11-13 has always been our go to for reassurance in these difficult days. ***"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."*** Whether your concern is about coping with the challenges across the nation, or the challenges facing the Church, maybe we can be reassured to know that God is not daunted in the ways that we are as He sees the way out of things in ways that we don't. That's why the bible was right to record that ***"Our Ways are not always His Ways and neither are His Ways our Ways."*** Take heart there is hope no matter what challenges we face.

Wishing you every Blessing in Christ  
Calum D. Macdonald



*Visits Giffnock;  
the Park Church  
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**Sunday 15th. May 2022  
10am till 1.00pm**

**Mon 25<sup>th</sup> July - Sun 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022**



**Summer Mission is back**



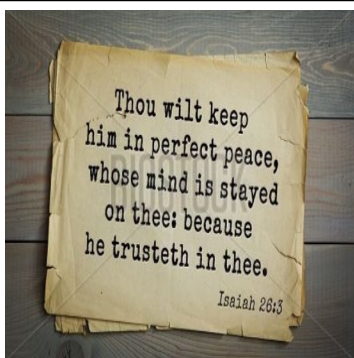
*In Our  
Thoughts  
and Prayers*

**The funeral of Billy Sinclair**

*With Sadness I have to announce that the Funeral Arrangements for the Funeral of the late Billy Sinclair who died suddenly on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April. His Funeral Service is scheduled to take place on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May in Linn Crematorium at 1pm. As an issue for prayer - Please remember his wife Margaret, their two sons Stewart and Scott along with his daughter Shirley.*

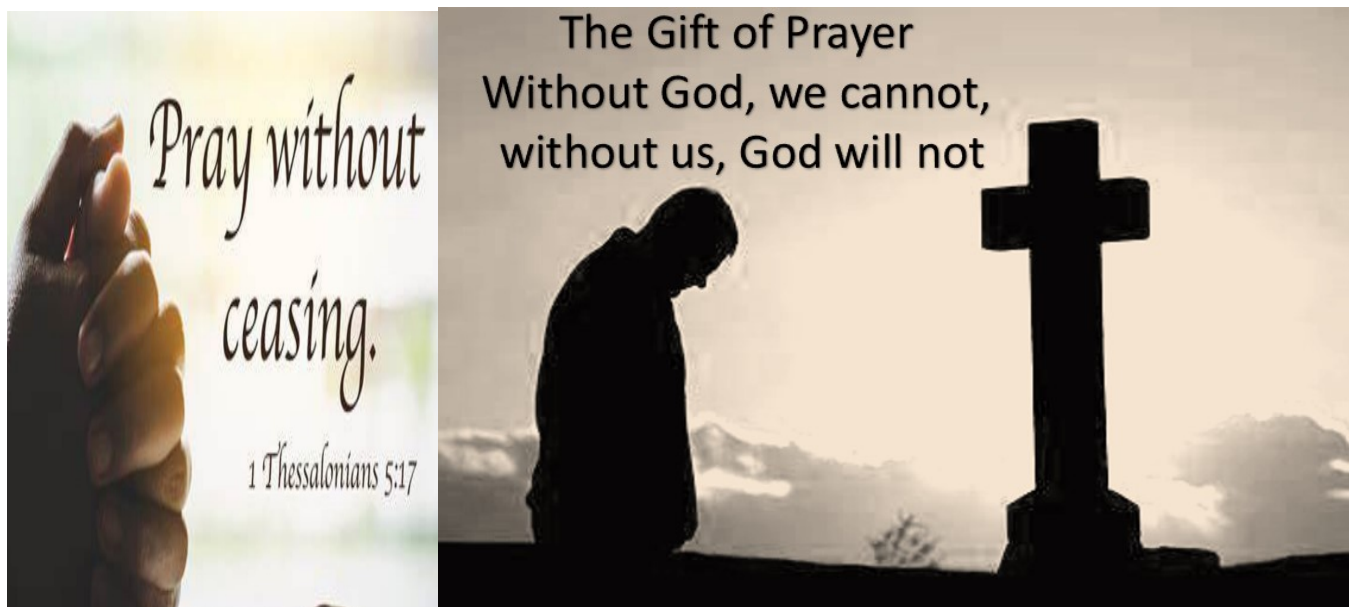
**The Funeral of Bill Scott**

*Following on from the announcement last week intimating the death of another of our members, Bill Scott, I can intimate that arrangements are now in place for his Funeral Service which is scheduled to take place on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> May in Linn Crematorium at 3pm. We prayerfully and fondly remember his wife Ann at this time along with the family, those both near and far seeking God's comfort for both these Families at this sad time.*



*Thou wilt keep  
him in perfect peace,  
whose mind is stayed  
on thee: because  
he trusteth in thee.*

*Isaiah 26:3*



**(Our prayer today is adapted from the Knotted Prayer)**

Let us Pray

God our Father it is good that we have a promise to hold onto in these dark days of uncertainty and worry for so many today that we can come before the Maker of the Heavens and the Earth and pour out our deepest fears and worries knowing that your hand is already upon us because of your great Love demonstrated in Jesus. We thank you for that Love that you have shed abroad in our hearts for your abiding presence within us and your never-ending mercy upon us even when we don't deserve it.

Lord untie the knots that fill our minds, our hearts and our lives. Remove the have nots, the can nots and the do nots, these mindsets that hold us back from You and from others. In the actions we enter into, erase the will nots that come about from our unwilling and stubborn hearts, the may nots that make us resistant to Your will and purpose, the might nots that allow fears and doubt to creep into our hearts this day. Release us from the could nots, the would nots and the should nots that obstruct our Christian duty and service in our lives

Most of all Gracious God, we humbly pray that You remove from our minds, our hearts and our lives the 'am nots' that have we have allowed to hold us back from you. Help us to realise afresh the mercy of your Love upon us, the Grace of your Forgiveness to us and Your Call to reach out to others in Jesus' name that they too may come to faith in the Saviour who loved them and gave himself for them. This we humbly pray in Jesus' name .... AMEN

But the wisdom that comes from heaven  
is first of all pure; then peace-loving,  
considerate, submissive, full of mercy  
and good fruit, impartial and sincere.

**James 3:17**



### **Matthew 25: 31 - 46**

#### ***The Sheep and the Goats***

31 *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.*

34 *“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’*

37 *“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’*

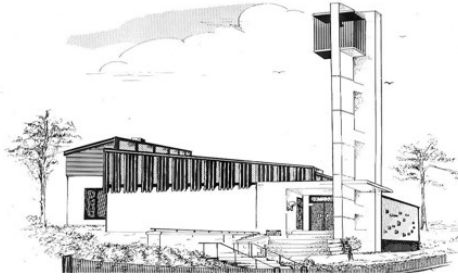
40 *“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’*

41 *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.’*

44 *“They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?’*

45 *“He will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.’ 46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

# Giffnock : the Park Church



*Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2022 A Time for Reflection*

*'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25: 40)*

I wonder how popular these verses among the passages of the Old & New Testament. For many, these words are precious because they are these rare moments where we can read or hear the very words of Jesus which we don't have a lot of outside the parables of Jesus and the sermon on the mount. We will read at great length of what happened and what Jesus did but we really only have snippets of these moments that Jesus often taught.

In universities and colleges across the land and beyond, scholars and students alike will see this as part of what is referred to as the eschatological teaching of Jesus where it is understood to be referring to the end of days. For many preachers this is a subject that either they steer clear of for fear of upsetting their congregation or they become somewhat obsessive about becoming one of those Hell and Damnation preachers. For others the story of the sheep and the goats has become immortalised to such a degree allowing folk to merely pigeon hole people as they try to compartmentalise people into categories.

The story is even told of a new minister who having just been ordained to his new parish church, is at the door of the church that first Sunday morning shaking hands with those parishioners he is meeting for the first time after the service. Standing just off to his right and behind him is his Session Clerk and every now and again he would lean forward and whisper in his ear... "sheep" and as the next one passes, he might say "Goat".

Pigeon holing people is one of Humanity's great past times, it's something we all do. How often have we heard someone say, "He's a Chancer that one." or He's a Charmer - he could sell ice cubes to the Eskimos"

These words from Matthew 25 have been the subject of many a sermon in the story of the church across the centuries from earliest days. In many ways the Bible will remind us that "there is nothing new under the sun", (Ecclesiastes 1: 9). Fashions are cyclical, antique dealers hold on to those articles that have no value now but will return in time as something popular for purchase again be it Royal Doulton porcelain or those ancient bell bottom Jeans you haven't worn since the 60's or your platform shoes and tartan bay city roller trousers. The thinking is ... one day they might be worth something. (Heaven help us all when there is a Bay City rollers Revival.) There are various themes arising from these verses, each of which has been the subject of many a scholar's writing and many a minister's sermon.

There is of course the very obvious and controversial subject of Heaven and Hell but there is also that of the danger of Judging others when it is not our place to do so and how that ties with how we might make just discernments about people. Then there is the over riding theme of how the Christian should or should not react to things. How we behave and what we should be doing and why.

If we dip our toes in each of these themes we can perhaps spark a wee thought that might make us wise about the things of faith and the ways we live our lives. So then, the first of these is Heaven or Hell. You might think that folk don't want to speak about such things but across the years some have profited greatly from it. Heaven and Hell was the Subject for a music album by the rock Band Black Sabbath. Such was the success it sold over a million copies in the 80's earning them a Platinum Disc award. More recently this has been a track by Kanye West. In contemporary Christian music terms there were two Nottinghamshire lads who wrote a song called heaven tell which begins with the first line ... "Time will Tell Heaven or Hell".

In these post-modernist times there are many in the church today who are very uncomfortable with this subject. They will happily think of the Joy of heaven but go white with fear when having to think about the judgement of Hell. There was flavour of that as I watched the Film Belfast detailing the early life of the actor and director Kenneth Branagh living in Belfast as a young boy during the times of what those in Northern Ireland and beyond referred to as the Troubles. During the film, the young Kenneth goes to Church where he is confronted terrifyingly by the Fire Brimstone preacher of the church. Such has been the fear of such things, I suspect that this created a need to formulate a theological train of thought that seeks in whatever way possible to

undermine, rule out or just plain ignore the threat of eternal Judgement and more particularly eternal Sentencing. Yet this is a subject with which Jesus is very candid. In his view there is such a place and he spoke of it candidly more than once. Scholars have argued the toss over what Hell is like.

For some it is a place of Eternal Fire, for others a place of eternal suffering, for some a place of ultimate annihilation while others have argued a place of extreme cold (I'm not so sure how they reached that conclusion). The one thing they can say without any need for explanation is that it is a place you probably don't really want to go.

Heaven is of course a much more pleasant prospect to consider, that place where God Resides, where Jesus is said to be preparing a place for us since the moment of resurrection. Our understanding of the qualification for heaven has become somewhat watered down from what the bible teaches. Many today think that it is all about living what is often referred to as a good life and that that should be sufficient. The problem is we know living a good life is in fact insufficient as "all have sinned and fallen short of God's Glory." (Romans 3: 23). In Matthew 25 we read there these words. ***"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" (Matthew 25:34).*** It speaks of the call to those who have the blessing of God and the consequences of those who don't further down the reading. Heaven and Hell is real and the option of choice I believe to be very much on the table even if the choices that we have are not choices we want to have to face.

Secondly, we are, I think, reminded of a need to know the difference between what is right and what is wrong, a need for knowing when we are being judgemental and when we are showing discernment and being able to know the difference. We need to realise this about how the Christian responds and in this moment of teaching, Jesus is helping us to understand that for the Christian, it is not just about standing back and letting the world follow its self-destructive path at times. Rather we should show that compassion and graciousness in our willingness to help thus demonstrating God's grace in the way we treat others reflecting the way God has demonstrated his own Love Grace and Forgiveness.

As a Street Pastor, the goal is not to be preachy to those whom we encounter, but to offer to listen, to care and to help those in that particular moment of need regardless of whether they are homeless or drunk, gay or straight, black or white or any other colour you can think of. We will often read

of Jesus doing that very thing with those whom he encountered, whether the Samaritan woman at the well, the blind man at the side of the road whose sight was restored or the prostitute about to be stoned till Jesus intervened refusing to "cast the first rock". Making judgements about people is very different from making judgements about how to resolve challenges they face.

If we were to take these words of Matthew 25 in isolation, we could make a very strong argument that this is just about making the doing of good things for people who are down on their luck something that secures our place in heaven. However, that is not the best way to understand God's Word to us. These Verses speaking of the Sheep and the goats in Matthew chapter 25 centre on the mindset and attitude of the Christian not the actions of a do-gooder. Our understanding, first of all, should always be that there but for the Grace of God Go I. In my time as minister in Saltcoats there were some in the church and outwith the Church who were the "See Me's" who needed to be seen as a good person in the eyes of those round about. They had clearly forgotten or never fully understood the words of the easter hymn that spoke of how:-

*We may not know, we cannot tell, what pains he had to bear,  
but we believe it was for us he hung and suffered there.*

*He died that we might be forgiven, he died to make us good,  
that we might go at last to heaven, saved by his precious blood.*

*There was no other good enough to pay the price of sin,  
he only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in.*

In closing let me simply reflect on these final thoughts. No matter what we do in life, it will never be enough to satisfy God's demand for Righteousness on our own part, that is why the cross of Calvary demands faith on our part to trust in the one who Hung and suffered there - who died to make us good - because there was no other good enough. Our faith should and must always be a reflection of our thankfulness for God's Grace upon our own lives and our willingness to reflect that same love that God shed abroad in our hearts that we might share that love with others. In short God requires us to be the sheep in the story not the goats.

Every Blessing  
Calum





*May you know the Blessing of  
God the Father, God the Son  
and God the Holy Spirit...  
In the morning and in the Evening  
May you feel His presence.  
In your coming and going, may you  
see His guidance.  
In your Weeping and Rejoicing  
may you know and be reassured  
of his Eternal Love  
now ans Always  
Amen*