

Kirkgate Parish Church 20-9-2020

Well Hello and welcome all who are listening in at this time to our wee service on this the 20th of September 2020. As always if you listen in at 10.30am you will hear this service live, but abbreviated for there is still no singing in the church hall because of the Covid 19 restrictions. However, once the live feed is over you will revert back to the pre-recorded version with hymns and music to sing along to.

Remember to get your dedications for the Requests show to Stuart by next Sunday the information is on the web site for it will have a Harvest theme at the end of this month - So messages and requests by next Sunday for that and also anything you want put into the October magazine. Yes, the year is slowly but surely slipping away.

With that in mind Maureen is looking for the Christmas Box appeal stuff, articles and boxes. Please speak to her about the exact things you can put in the boxes as well. Her number is 01294 464969

Also the 'Call' paper for Nigel is available for signing from this Sunday. You will find the edict on the website and phone service, but the times you can access the church for signing are the next 2 Sundays after the morning service, and on Mon / Wed / Fri from 2-3pm, and Tues / Thurs / Sat from 11-12noon. Check out the web site on this as well.

Last week we visited that well rehearsed message of encouragement for the Christian. Today we might take a little time to think over our attitudes towards our status as servants of Jesus and what that means for us. We touch upon the planet and the impact we are having on that as well and what our attitude should be to that, but first shall we calm our hearts and minds once more in the presence of the Lord as we come to worship.

The call to worship comes from

Psalm 95:6

6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;

Let us sing in our places at home for we cannot sing in church, let us however sing out in the house in defiance of the Covid 19 pandemic that will not dampen our praise of the Lord.

CH4 565 My life flows on in endless song. How can I keep from Singing?

My life flows on in endless song
above earth's lamentation :
I catch the sweet, though far off, hymn
that hails a new creation.

Refrain:

*No storm can shake my inmost calm
while to that Rock I'm clinging.
Since love is Lord of heaven and earth,
how can I keep from singing ?*

Through all the tumult and the strife,
I hear that music ringing.
It finds an echo in my soul -
how can I keep from singing ?

Refrain

What though my joys and comforts die ?
The Lord, my Saviour, liveth.
What though the darkness round me close ?
Songs in the night he giveth.

Refrain

The peace of Christ makes fresh my heart,
a fountain ever springing.
All things are mine since I am his !
How can I keep from singing ?

Refrain

Come let us Pray our prayer of Approach and Confession as rehearsed from the Lectionary today and is very fitting for what we are think about today.

Creator of Life,

At your word, the Earth brought forth plants yielding seed and trees of every kind bearing fruit. The rivers, mountains, minerals, seas and forests sustained life. The eyes of all looked to You to satisfy the needs of every living thing. And throughout time the Earth has sustained life. Through the planetary cycles of days and seasons, renewal and growth, you open your hand to give creatures our food in the proper time.

In your Wisdom, you granted a Sabbath; a blessed time to rest in gratitude for all that you have given; a time to liberate ourselves from vicious consumption; a time to allow the land and all creatures to rest from the burden of production. But these days our living pushes the planet beyond its limits. Our demands for growth, and our never-ending cycle of production and consumption are exhausting our world. The forests are leached, the topsoil erodes, the fields fail, the deserts advance, the seas acidify, the storms intensify. We have not allowed the land to observe her Sabbath, and the Earth is struggling to be renewed.

During this Season of Creation, we ask you to grant us courage to observe a Sabbath for our planet. Strengthen us with the faith to trust in your providence. Inspire us with the creativity to share what we have been given. Teach us to be satisfied with enough. And as we proclaim a Jubilee for the Earth, send Your Holy Spirit to renew the face of creation.

In the name of the One who came to proclaim good news to all creation, Jesus, the same creator who looked over the earth in the beginning, the same saviour who came to us and who gave us the words of the prayer we now give back to you when we say together in our places,

Our Father, who art in Heaven

Hallowed be Thy name,

Thy Kingdom come,

Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil
For thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory
For ever
Amen

[Our Bible Reading is taken from Matthew 20 verses 1- 16](#)

Matthew 20:1-16

Amplified Bible

[Let us hear the word of God](#)

Labourers in the Vineyard

20 “For the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of an estate who went out in the morning at dawn to hire workmen for his vineyard. **2** When he had agreed with the labourers for a [a]denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. **3** And he went out about the third hour (9:00 a.m.) and saw others standing idle in the market place; **4** and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right (an appropriate wage).’ And they went. **5** He went out about the sixth hour (noon) and the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.), and did the same thing. **6** And about the eleventh hour (5:00 p.m.) he went out and found others standing *around*, and he said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle all day?’ **7** They answered him, ‘Because no one hired us.’ He told them, ‘You go into the vineyard also.’ **8** “When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last [to be hired] and ending with the first [to be hired].’ **9** Those who had been *hired* at the eleventh hour (5:00 p.m.) came and received a denarius each [a day’s wage]. **10** Now when the first [to be hired] came, they thought they would get more; but each of them also received a denarius. **11** When they received it, they

protested *and* grumbled at the owner of the estate, **12** saying, ‘These men who came last worked [only] one hour, and yet you have made them equal [in wages] to us who have carried [most of] the burden and [worked in] the scorching heat of the day.’ **13** But the owner of the estate replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no injustice. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’ **14** Take what belongs to you and go, but I choose to give to this last man [hired] the same as I give to you. **15** Am I not lawfully permitted to do what I choose with what is mine? Or is your eye [b]envious because I am generous?’ **16** So those who are last [in this world] shall be first [in the world to come], and those who are first, last.”

My reflection today is entitled - Attitudes, Status and Contentment.

Lord bless my deliberations here let it be of some use to those who hear and let it gather hearts closer to you in Jesus name.

The Bible doesn't talk expressly about economic inequality in terms we would recognise. It doesn't necessarily lead us towards a particular economic system. It talks about spiritual equality and the shared dignity that comes from the image of God in us.

We also see Jesus challenging unjust economic structures, declaring the liberation of the poor, and warning the rich about greed.

We find Biblical principles around fair access to resources, rules to stop the accumulation of debt, and the Jubilee that served as an economic reset ever 7 years for the Jews. Justice and shared blessing are themes that run all through Scripture.

So the CoS lectionary is concerned in this month with the effects humankind mainly in the developed world, so called, are having on climate change and the destruction of the worlds resources for personal gain.

The rich nations exploiting things for their own ends. Grabbing much of the worlds resources for themselves - always needing and wanting more. Never really satisfied. You see the big idea of our economy is to grow. We talk of growing the economy, never about the richness of enjoying what we already have, of being content and satisfied with what we have gained, sometimes at the expense of others.

We hear politicians talk of 'levelling up' so that those with little can enjoy a little more of what some already have gained. Never is there talk of 'levelling out'.

Being content to live with shared economies.

We always seem to accord to worldly ways by trying to gain more. More stuff, more reputation, more upward trending in our careers. Now some of that may not all be bad, but when we turn to our passage for today the one big question Jesus is answering in the light of events and questions around him is that of attitude to this idea of always looking to be better than the next person.

Always wanting more than the fair share. Jesus teaching about the attitudes in the Kingdom may have been a bit narrower than we are expounding this morning, but the principles remain the same. Attitude attitude, attitude to reward and contentment of status.

Jesus having once more to challenge those around Him about what should be the right attitude to what we have and what we strive for. Even to chastising his disciples once more.

What is the just parameters that govern what we should all share in the Kingdom. Jesus teaching goes counter cultural and counter to modern day economies.

Also about the injustice of what we are doing to the poorer nations with climate change, we say we are having a green policy, and rightly so but is it enough and is it quick enough.

Who is the greatest in Heaven Lord when we get there beside you? The disciples asked earlier in Matthew 18. Jesus points to the

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little child. We are to approach our faith with the obedience of a child who trusts mum and dad.

What do I need to do to be saved the rich young man asked Jesus? Get rid of all that distracts you from giving all to God. Money for instance. For others it is other precious material things.

Attitude again!

Why was the elderly woman who put the two pennies in the offering at the Temple honouring God more than the rich who gave a little from their vast wealth?

Attitude once more!

The right frame of mind and heart. Contentment with what grace God has given us and what He has allowed us in life.

So Jesus will tell another parable unique to Matthew's Gospel.

These men were, standing in the market were waiting to be hired. They were desperate for the work. That was the way of things in Palestine of their day. These were not slaves or servants. These were the self employed of their time. No one to feed them or give them anything if they did not find work. A bit like today, where some self employed fall between some of the financial help on offer in the 'lock down'.

They would stand all day waiting to be hired. And that hiring was needed. For the grapes were ready come the end of September just before the rains came and there was always a mighty rush to gather them in before that. So every hand was needed. These men were not necessarily skilled but labour to be used none the less.

A denarius a day would see the wife and kids fed. No work and they would starve.

The master comes at dawn the start of the Jewish day 6am and he comes every quarter until the eleventh hour at 5pm.

And lo! There were still men waiting to be hired and even an hour was valuable to the vineyard owners. Never the less the master here takes pity on these men for anything less than a denarius was not going to keep a family that night.

And so, in his generosity, he hires them and gives them the same denarius at the end of the hour as those who have been working all day.

Well - what would you say if you had joined the team at 6am and worked 12 hours and then these characters came worked an hour and took away the same wages?

Yes - me too! I would not be happy. I probably wouldn't say anything, but I would not be happy if I'm honest. Maybe you would be a little more vociferous than I - certainly my wife Deirdre would be.

But let us look at why Jesus is giving this parable because although it has a narrow teaching in this instance there are many levels we can reflect on today.

Firstly - it was the masters right to be generous and pay what he had agreed. The first comers to be hired had a contract and a denarius was paid to fulfil it.

The late comers had no contract, they were brought in at the end and the generosity and compassion of the master saw them receive an amount that would feed families for the day.

They were at the mercy of the master to be given anything he offered and they would have been content to take anything.

Let us see further what Jesus is telling the disciples about the first and the last. He is saying, "look you guys, you have been in this fellowship with me in a privileged position for three years. You came in early. But many are coming in later and all will receive the same welcome in the Kingdom. Those poor exploited,

marginalised, down trodden souls who come to love the Messiah Jesus and repent will gain much in Heaven, those who have spent a life of luxury at the expense of others might have very lowly positions in Heaven. Verse 20 of our passage

16 So those who are last [in this world] shall be first [in the world to come], and those who are first, last.” Matt 20 verse 16 (AB)

Later in the chapter Jesus will tell his disciples a truth that must remain a fundamental part of their Christian faith,

Matt 20

26b “whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

In God’s economy there is no favoured soul. All are equal.

It may be that we resent the new arrivals and the changes they may bring in the church.

Those doing things a bit differently than we used to, but glorifying God never the less and those who came late to faith are every bit as welcome in the Kingdom as those who are life long Christian members fully paid up and wearing the T shirt.

Christians do not work for favour and reward on earth other than what the grace God will give and that might result in much other things being added as well. You know the song. ‘Seek ye first the Kingdom of God’.

And perhaps a more important message for us today - that it does not matter when You come to faith in Jesus our Lord, but that one does so.

Many a time there are death bed conversions.

People coming to faith late hold as high a position as we who maybe Christians all our life. Think on the criminal on the cross next to Jesus.

Luke 23 at the crucifixion,

Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."

Salvation at the 11th hour is every bit as valuable to Christ.

This passage in another sense teaches on the grace and compassion of the Father God. This is a most tender thought running behind this parable too.

God knows our needs. The master could see the need in these men, come lately, looking desperately for work. These men were not layabouts, idlers. There was no reason to be at the market wall except to find work, to support the family.

People who come into the church, who sincerely ask about God might be in need of healing, of love, of someone to care, of someone to listen who can lobby for justice.

Friends, to return to the beginning, every little bit we do to reduce a carbon footprint helps even in the microcosm of the planetary survival. It says to the person we see on the tele in the drought ravaged landscape of Africa, I care, we care and we are compassionate in giving by watching what we do to our planet God has given us dominion over.

Jesus would return to this topic many times to ready the disciples for ministry. As we go forward into a new era at Kirkgate let us remember that those in this priority area might just be the ones standing waiting on the approach of a loving compassionate heart that can see them not as idlers, but people in need, people who will accept what ever you have to offer with gratitude and that offer of the love of Christ and the invitation to know Jesus will weight far beyond the thoughts of climbing the ladder in a world of greed and wayward ambition.

And please remember in prayer all those who will be waiting at the wall this October when the furlough scheme ends next months for behind each person there is a need to feed their family or pay their

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rent. Feel especially for the young among us who are facing a difficult time in history.

God be your guide in these coming months ahead and for the years to come that you will treat any new comers to this church with the same generosity that your long suffering friends in faith have found over the years.

Amen

Let us pray

Loving Lord God help us to be content with what we have. Help us too to look at our life style and how each little thing we do affects our neighbours and the eco system of our amazing planet.

Lord you have shaken the earth many times over the Millenia, come now to sooth and to heal the planet that life can be sustained yet and for the longest time. Help us save the wonderful animals that face extinction over the next few years and on into the future.

And so Lord God as we think of how we should approach material wealth and our place in Your Kingdom as Christians bless us with wisdom to follow in the ways of our King and servant Jesus.

Amen

**Reflective music -
CH4 528 Make me a channel of Your peace.**

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love;
Where there is injury your pardon, Lord;
And where there's doubt true faith in you.

Refrain:

*Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light;
And where there's sadness, ever joy.
Refrain

Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
In giving to all men that we receive;
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Shall we pray our prayers of Intercession - let us pray

Loving Lord God, who sustains all life, there are many many human souls in great need today. Need of healing, need of love, need of security, need of life giving food and water. Father we open our hearts to You now that all those who we feel touch us deeply spirit to spirit. We cannot know all their names, we cannot see their predicament we just know they are part of us to us through our bond of humanity. Save them Lord in Your mercy. Bring our suffering peoples of this planet to a place of health, where water food and love are plentiful. Where spiritual welfare rests in our Lord Jesus because your army of disciples are walking the land with joy and purpose in their hearts. Let that message carry on over this wonderful planet earth but let it also resonate right here in Saltcoats and Ardrossan.

Father bless this place that the sea that separates islands shall not separate our love for each other. Lord God we pray for the places that need Your message of salvation and touch this day. May Your word of life gather many souls around us.

When suffering finds root in illness like Covid19, or the shock of unemployment or the chains of addiction threatens to win away the beauty of in life, please hear our prayers for mercy.

Father God show the compassion and help us to open new mission fields before us that we might witness into all life around us bringing love, peace and joy for all we know and love, for all we know and pray for today.

Lord hear the prayers for those we know personally that need help this day in our short moment of silent prayer.

Lord in Your glory, in the place of darkness and in the Heavens hear these the prayers of all who come in worship today for we all bring these silent and spoken petitions and prayers in the precious name of our Lord and saviour Jesus.

Amen.

We'll thank you once more for tuning in remember to get your requests in for Stuart and think about a magazine article and sign the calling, I hope you have found a blessing in joining in fellowship today and so let us be on our way remembering who we are as disciples of Jesus and what he opens our eyes and ears to around us as His Church commissioned to serve and speak out for justice as we go encouraged and uplifted in the faith. Our closing hymn assures us that Jesus is always with us guiding, teaching through the word and protecting...

CH4 561 Blessed Assurance.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

Refrain

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels, descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Refrain

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

Refrain

Let us hear the words of the blessing.

Let the heart be content with all that the Lord allows, let the mind not be wracked in envy and covertness, but let the heart and mind draw close to God being content and relaxed in the presence of the Lord Jesus and may we go in peace and joy and the blessing of God Almighty, Father Son and Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us all now and evermore.

Amen