

**Ardrossan and Saltcoats Kirkgate Parish Church, Service Recording
14th June 2020. (Brian Murray Locum Minister)** Please excuse the grammar,
punctuation and spelling, these transcripts are usually never seen by the congregation!

Opening Voluntary - 'Litany to the Holy Spirit, by Peter Hurford

Hello and welcome to this recording for the 14th June 2020, The second Sunday after Pentecost. So again a very warm welcome whether you are visiting or are a regular listener on the web site, phone-in, or recorded memory sticks I do hope this wee recording cheers you up a bit in this time of continued lock down and shielding and you feel blessed as we worship together.

The opening voluntary Stuart played today was 'Litany to the Holy Spirit, by Peter Hurford

Well things have been fairly quiet on the whole, folks in the churches around are just getting on with it. I hope you enjoyed the West Kilbride Church online communion service last week those who could tune in.

Now a very important announcement let me read what Stuart our, organist musical director, web site manager and general helper in many fields has written of an exciting new idea for us.

"Now that we've got the hang of putting together these weekly services, we've decided to branch out and create a new, initially monthly, podcast called Kirkgate: By Request. This will be an additional audio-only feature with favourite hymns and organ music. So, to all our listeners and members, we're looking for requests or dedications for your favourite hymns, or maybe just a short message to your friends. Please send any messages by email to a new email address - requests@kirkgatechurch.org.uk , or contact either Stuart or Brian by phone or by traditional mail - details are in the Kirkgate Messenger. The first episode will be broadcast on Sunday 7th July at 7pm. Any content to be included within that programme will need to be with us the week beforehand - ie no later than Sunday 28th June, so please get in touch and help us make this a great success. "

The recording should be accessible on the phone as well as the web site and Stuart is looking into that now. So look out for that recording to come. I'll mention it again next Sunday and the next.

So Let us begin our worship today as always with a short few seconds of silence just to calm our hearts and prepare for worship in the Spirit where ever we are at the moment. Whatever place you are sitting in with tea or coffee in hand. Relax for a few minutes in the presence of Jesus.

Our call to worship is inspired from psalm 116

Come, Let us love the Lord our God, for he has heard the voice of His children;

he has heard our cry for mercy.

Because he turned his ear to hear, let us

call on him with joy and assurance as long as we live.

Praise be to God.

And we are going to praise so loudly we can be heard proclaiming the glory of the Lord while we sing along with CH4124 Praise to the Lord

CH4 124 Praise to the Lord

Praise to the Lord,
the Almighty, The King of creation ;
praise God, my soul,
for in him are your health and salvation ;
come all who hear, into his presence draw near,
joining in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord,
who in all things
is wondrously reigning, shields you from harm
and is gently yet firmly sustaining.
Have you not seen how your heart's wishes have been
granted by God's wise ordaining ?

Praise to the Lord,
who with blessing
and power will defend you ;
surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend you ;
ponder anew what the Almighty can do :
God will for ever befriend you.

Praise to the Lord !
O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath,
come now with praises before him!
Let the Amen sound from God's people again :
gladly for ever adore him.

Shall we join our hearts and minds in prayer - let us pray

Loving Lord God

You created the world.

Shaping tall mountains and deep valleys, flat moors and calm lochs,
creatures that fly high or swim deep.

Variety that astounds us, a complexity beyond our comprehension. Your
creation amazes us always and at times makes us laugh with joy.

God, You created each one of us and know us through and through. You
know our names, the number of hairs on our heads,
the words on our lips before we even speak them.

God, Your understanding of each individual astounds us, its reach is beyond
our imagining.

Your comprehensive recognition surprises us, at times it makes us laugh
with astonishment.

So gracious God, who allows us to laugh,
as we contemplate the world around us and the precious life of every human
being, let us not doubt that everything is possible for You.

This morning we gather to worship You and offer our joyful praise
for You have forgiven every bad thing we have done and do when we
confess in the name of Jesus.

So let us repeat once more our prayer that Jesus our Lord and Saviour taught
us when we say together,

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 Scripture Readings

Let us hear the word of the Lord taken from the NIV translation.

Genesis 18 verses 1- 15 and Deirdre will read that for us now.

The Three Visitors

18 The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day. **2** Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.

3 He said, “If I have found favour in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. **4** Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. **5** Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant.”

“Very well,” they answered, “do as you say.”

6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah. “Quick,” he said, “get three seahs^[b] of the finest flour and knead it and bake some bread.”

7 Then he ran to the herd and selected a choice, tender calf and gave it to a servant, who hurried to prepare it. **8** He then brought some curds and milk and the calf that had been prepared, and set these before them. While they ate, he stood near them under a tree.

9 “Where is your wife Sarah?” they asked him.

“There, in the tent,” he said.

10 Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.”

Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him.

11 Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. **12** So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?”

13 Then the Lord said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh and say, ‘Will I really have a child, now that I am old?’ **14** Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”

15 Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, “I did not laugh.”

But he said, “Yes, you did laugh.”

Amen and may God add His blessing to these words to our hearts and minds

Let us sing once more **CH4 182 Now thank we all our God**

Now thank we all our God,
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom his world rejoices ;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

Oh, may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever-joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us,
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God
who reigns in highest heaven -
the Father and the Son
and Spirit - now be given :
the one, eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore ;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

My reflection today is entitled, 'You're having a laugh?'

You might wonder where I am coming from with this. 'You're having a laugh.' And no we are not going to be having a laughing therapy session, not that that is a bad thing in relieving stress. Laughter in the Bible isn't mentioned very much. Joy is, a bit more especially in the psalms.....

"Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy." – Psalm 47:1

or

"God, who sits in Heaven, laughs!" – Psalm 2:4

"God has a smile on His face." – Psalm 42:5

or like a song we can sing from Isaiah, and we'll sing it at the end of the service today,

1 “You shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and hills before you shall burst into song, and the trees of the field shall clap their hands.” — Isaiah 55:12

We are joyful in our hymns around the great Christian calendar events like Christmas and Easter Sunday. We praise with zeal and might just see a smile at the corner of a church member while they sing. A wee up turn of the corner of the mouth might escape a good presbyterian at times.

for

“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.” — Proverbs 17:22

I jest of course it might be more of a grimace.

I don't know if you ever heard the saying, Your face is as long as Leith Walk. Meaning you looked miserable. Mum used to say that to us kids at times, then we are from the East Coast, of course.

Some Christian Churches in other nations still celebrate Bright Sunday or Humour Sunday. The early church had a day of feasting the Sunday after Easter, playing practical jokes on each other and engaging in fun and laughter. A tradition mostly gone from the calendar now, mores the pity.

Laughter can signify lots of different moods. Joy, cynicism, nervousness, wonder, happiness, to name a few. We laugh in the weirdest situations. We find joy in the midst of suffering at times. If we do not take ourselves too seriously we might laugh at our own predicaments for nothing on earth should trouble us too deeply for we have the reassuring promise of Heaven as reward.

Deirdre and I have been overtaken by Holy Laughter on occasions. I remember a time when we had been praying in the evening at a Christian Conference gathering and many people came forward that night for prayer. It was a long night and when the team got together at the end we all joined hands and laughter started and was so infectious we took it back to the residence and the others in the flat started ending themselves with laughter with us. When asked what we were laughing at we had no answer, but I had a good sleep that night except for the occasional chuckle in my dreams.

However, this reflection today isn't about laughing in the face of the real and worrying tragedies that are happening to our world at this time. We cannot laugh any where near them, but we can laugh when we see the amazing supernatural moves of God. We can be amazed and laugh in wonder for

nothing is too hard for God to achieve, when prayers are answered and they **are** answered all the time.

Many must have laughed in relief at the miracles Jesus performed, for the pain he removed, the disease He banished and the life he breathed back into being. Jesus himself must have laughed for He was a charismatic figure, a young man in His prime, leading twelve rough men around lake Galilee and all the way to Jerusalem. No way were they solemn in worship and reverence all the time. Jokes, practical tricks, silly talk must have been entered into on the road. After all Jesus worked on building sites, say no more.

What makes us laugh out loud. LOL as we see written in text messages. I used to think that meant 'lots of love'. Jokes make you laugh if they are any good. Remember the list of typos found in church magazines. Things like

'Don't let worry kill you, let the Church help'. or how about this one.

'Don't miss the Young Wives' Victorian Evening next month. It will be a fun night and some of the women will wear clothes.'

We laugh at what we would think of as incredulous events, just as we find Sarah doing in the passage from Genesis. She embarrassed herself with a cynical disbelieving laugh when the Lord prophesied that she would have a son by the following year. His name was to be Isaac which means 'He laughs' What a title.

What a lovely character Isaac must have been for those who make us laugh have a gift to ease the meeting. To put us at ease on a first encounter.

Sarah's laughter was different to Abraham's laughter. In the previous chapter 17. Abraham was also told by the Lord he met face to face. Jesus who appears if you like through the OT in many places many times.

Gen 17:15-17

15 God also said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah. 16 I will bless her and will surely give you a son by her. I will bless her so that she will be the mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her."

17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?"

Sarai - quarrelsome

Sarah - Princess or woman of high rank.

19 Then God said.....your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. (AS I said Isaac means - He laughs)

Abraham, father of God's people to be numerous as nations. Abraham at 100 would have a son, he laughed at the miracle and at the sense of timing of God. He and Sarah had wanted a son all their life. So much so that Sarah had given Abraham to lie with her maid servant and He had sired Ishmael by her. He had a son now a young teenager by this time.

So what of the passage. A hot June day where the only air moving was at the mouth of the tent below the majestic oak tree at Mamre. Abraham spies three stranger approaching. He is not aware of who these travellers are, but in the custom of the time runs to them to offer hospitality.

3 He said, "If I have found favour in your eyes, my lord, do not pass your servant by. 4 Let a little water be brought, and then you may all wash your feet and rest under this tree. 5 Let me get you something to eat, so you can be refreshed and then go on your way—now that you have come to your servant."
"Very well," they answered, "do as you say."

And what hospitality, he brings the very best by his own hand, he instructs his wife Sarah to cook the bread with her own hand, these men are not to be served by his servants, he graciously entertains them himself. He stands by under the tree while they dine on fresh veal and drink cool milk with freshly cooked uneven bread from the coals.

The question that alerts Abraham to the identity of the Lord comes -

9 "Where is your wife Sarah?"

A name only the Lord would have known as that name was chosen by Him earlier as we read.

In the tent waiting just behind the flap of the door Sarah listened. She was to bear a son at her age of 99. The laugh came thinking of Abraham and her at 100 bearing a child when they were so old.

The Lord heard the laugh even so low as it might have been. Sarah in her embarrassment lied. She said she had not laughed, but her guests confirmed she had.

Two of the guests, angels of the Lord were leaving to go to investigate and perhaps destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and the Lord talked with Abraham who by custom walked a little of the road with His guest whom he had given lavish hospitality to as customs demanded.

Sarah, Sarah that little laugh, the Lord knew of spoke of distrust. Of disbelief. But within 9 months the laughter would be genuine wonder at the birth of a son. For she now knew that Nothing is too hard for the Lord.

What ever He ordains will come to pass. Last week I spoke of the very beginning of the universe, the cosmos - stars, planets, and the tiniest electron.

Verse 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord? As I said, nine months from now I will return, and Sarah will have a son."

Let us laugh and be joyful at the power and wisdom of the Lord. For He came to be with us for a time, caring, sharing, teaching justice and healing. And dying on the cross for the redemption of humanity. Laugh all who think that too hard for the Lord. Or better still laugh at the victory of the resurrection, for the practical trick Jesus played on defeating satan. Breath taking audacious, powerful, life giving, holy, compassionate, suffering in pain and blood flowing on to the dusty earth. Laugh for the God who opens minds and hearts with the present Holy Spirit, the pneuma, wind and fire that blows where we do not see, but wait on the Lord to lift our hearts as we pray.

The question is directed back to us to answer what ever way our faith dictates.

Is anything too hard for the Lord?

How do we answer?

Luke 18:27

Good News Translation

27 Jesus answered, "What is humanly impossible is possible for God."

As Jeremiah exclaimed in 32:17

Amplified Bible

17 'Ah Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and by Your outstretched arm! There is nothing too difficult or too wonderful for You—

Can we laugh at the wonder of God?

Can we find it in our hearts in times of distress to laugh in the knowledge that God is in control?

The sovereign God works good for all those who love Him. The same Gods who answers sincere prayer brought by humble hearts.

Do we laugh at the absurdity of the thought that miracles still happen or do we scoff at times saying that God never listens to us anyway? Do we give a sneering chuckle when we hear of devout Christians witnessing of the power and majesty of the Lord who rules from Heaven and is with us in Spirit wherever we are?

Or do we metaphorically throw ourselves face down in relief and laughter of joy that God has prophesied over us, brought us to a place of peace and answered life long prayers at last. Prayers that we see come to fruition even when we ourselves are in the twilight years of life.

Can we believe that nothing is too hard for God, simply nothing we can bring in prayer is too hard? Eradicating Corona virus, bringing justice for those who suffer racism, bring healing to places that have ebola, Covid 19 and malaria all at once. A God who can do mighty acts upon our world and acts of compassion and grace on a very intimate scale for you and I when we pray?

Christian brothers and sisters, all who enquire of the Lord this day, we can do nothing for the Lord by our own strength for many things we would like to do are simply impossible for us, but with God's helping Spirit we can laugh at satan and serve Jesus with confidence in the love of God. Lighten your hearts fellow Christians and those who would know more of God for we have a one in Jesus that looks out for us and cares for us and wants to be with us through all eternity. Now we cannot cast that off with the comment 'You're having a laugh' for it is true just as the Bible tells us so. In the name of the Father Son and Holy

Spirit let us be encouraged in the faith and never forget that. Nothing is to hard for our God in all creation.

Amen

Amen.

Shall we pray our prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession.

Loving Lord God,

In long summer evenings when light lingers
and sunsets have time to deepen from light pink to deep red –

we offer You our thanks and praise.

We remember and hold before You

people in your world where the fading of the light brings not only darkness but sadness and discomfort.

May they know Your light.

When we are free to gather and share food and laughter with friends,
relatives, and those whom we love

and also when we are content to eat alone –

we offer You our thanks and praise.

We remember and hold before You

those who today will share meals tainted with sadness, those who through no choice of their own eat alone because of bereavement or shielding from the Corona virus, those who are hungry and have little food or money to buy food.

May they soon know joy and plenty.

When we have been offered hospitality that was generous or unexpected –
we have been blessed

and we offer You our thanks and praise.

We remember and hold before You refugees and those who are strangers in a foreign land, those for whom exceptional warmth and hospitality would mean so much especially at this time of lock down in many countries across our world..

May they know a rich welcome and ongoing support,

Lord God when someone who knows us a little, but not well, remembers our names –

we offer You our thanks for their care and attentiveness.

We remember and hold before You those who have been forced to change names or those who forget their names – the overseas student in a culture that feels alien, those who have been trafficked, those living with dementia.

May they know Your healing power, liberation and freedom.

And hear us too as we take time to remember and hold before You those caught up in the Corona virus, job losses, worry and anxiety for the future, loneliness, heart break, anxious about political unrest caused by racism and inequality, wars and many other afflictions that befall us.

Abba Father Minister to their needs we pray.

Ever creating, ever loving, ever encouraging God,
we offer You our deep thanks.

Use our gifts, talents and skills in the world
so that our lives may tell out Your praise and where possible aid those whom we have remember before You today in our time now of silent personal prayer.

Lord God in Your grace and mercy hear our silent and spoken prayers of the heart,
through Jesus Christ our loving Saviour

Amen

As we conclude our worship time with that joyous hymn:

CH4 804 You shall go out with Joy.

Of course you may not be going out at all but think of it as going out of this recording or leaving the living room for the kitchen so until we meet again.

804. You shall go out with joy.

*You shall go out with joy
And be led forth with peace,
And the mountains and the hills
Shall break forth before you.
There'll be shouts of joy
And the trees of the fields
Shall clap, shall clap their hands.*

*And the trees of the fields shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the fields shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the fields shall clap their hands,
And you'll go out with joy.*

Before the blessing let me tell you the closing voluntary is
Trumpet Tune, by Charpentier.

But first let us hear the words of the blessing.

Let us go in the joy and peace of the Lord with lightness of heart and mind
and may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with us all –now and always.
Amen

Trumpet Tune, by Charpentier.