

Worship at Home—1 November 2020

WORSHIP LEADER Grant Gordon

SCRIPTURE READER Jean Dick



It is with great sadness that we have to intimate the death of
Thomas (Graham) MacConnachie, 19 Riccarton Mains Road
Please pray for the family

Good morning and welcome to our worship wherever you may be joining us from, whether that be Currie or somewhere in Edinburgh, Scotland or further afield. While on this 'All Saints Day' our worship focuses on the 'Sermon on the Mount', let us first come together in our Call to Worship.

Call to worship—Words from Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.
For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

HYMN—I will sing the wondrous story—Mission Praise 315

I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me;
How He left the realms of glory
For the cross of Calvary.

Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
Sing it with the saints in glory,
Gathered by the crystal sea.

I was lost, but Jesus found me,
Found the sheep that went astray,
Raised me up and gently led me
Back into the narrow way.
Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story

Of the Christ who died for me,
Sing it with the saints in glory,
Gathered by the crystal sea.

He will keep me till the river
Rolls its waters at my feet;
Then at last He'll bring me over
Where the loved ones I shall meet
Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
Sing it with the saints in glory,
Gathered by the crystal sea.

Prayer of Approach, Confession and Thanksgiving

Creator God, maker of heaven and earth we delight in the beauty of your whole creation and at this time of year we see your presence in the Autumn colours. We marvel at the colours of the trees, yellows, browns and reds merging into a kaleidoscope of colour set against the backdrop of the setting sun. But we are conscious of signs of autumn's passing in the shortening days, misty mornings and winds that chill.



Heavenly Father, as we draw near to you in this time of on-line worship we thank you for the assurance we have that you are always with us. We come knowing that you will accept us not because we deserve it or because we are worthy, but because of your extravagant love. We thank you that no one is outside your love and no place beyond your concern. We thank you that you hold firmly to us, even when we try and struggle from your grasp. We thank you that your patience is never exhausted, no matter how many times we let you down.

God of mercy, forgive us when we are so consumed with our own lives that we lose sight of those around us in need of our love, care and help.

Forgive us if our silence and inaction has injured others.

Merciful God, forgive us for the harm we have done to the earth and the many ways we have taken for granted its abundant gifts.

God of mercy, forgive us if we have failed to do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with you. May we walk gently and recognise that it is a privilege to be alive.

Creator God, transform the worship that we bring until it reflects Your glory and majesty, for Your presence is woven into the life of the world and into our lives. Hear these our prayers, which we bring in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Bible Reading from Matthew 5: 1-16 read by Jean

The Sermon on the Mount

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.



The Beatitudes

He said:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

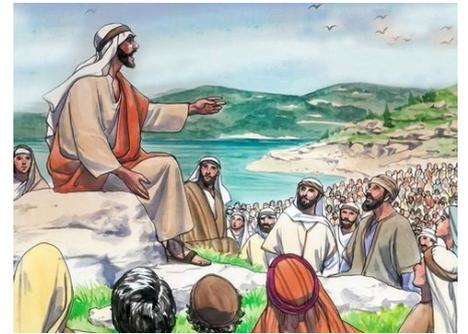
“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

THIS IS THE WORD OF THE LORD. THANKS BE TO GOD. AMEN.

WHO ARE TODAY'S SAINTS?

Let us Pray: Breathe on us, O God, that we may be filled with your Spirit and led by your living word. Bless the words of my lips and the meditations of all our hearts. We ask this in your name. Amen.

On this 'All Saints Day' one of the prescribed Lectionary readings features the 'Sermon on the Mount' and, in particular, the section known as the Beatitudes. These verses from Matthew's Gospel constitute one of the best known of all Christian texts, one of the most influential pieces of literature in history. When we look at those words, they are seen by some as simply lofty ethics and noble ideals, and by others as the spirit of liberal humanism that pervades our western world. But don't be misled, the Beatitudes are very much more than either of these interpretations. The Beatitudes are a proclamation of the promise and the command of God Almighty. Their brilliant light draws us like a moth to a spotlight; a light so bright that it sears and burns. No room is left for forms of piety which are nothing more than veneer and sham. They represent a job description, a personality profile of the new person that God is on the way to bringing into being in you and me if only we allow him. The Beatitudes are those gifts which God gives to everyone of us, that's our spiritual bonus, that's the perk for living out a life centred on Christ.



The Beatitudes are a series of bombshells. The people whom Jesus called happy the world would call wretched; and the people Jesus would call wretched the world would call happy. And when we read these verses sometimes we lose their real meaning and say to ourselves "I can't do this, this is too tough by far," as we contrast the reality of our lives against the character portrayed in the Beatitudes.

Sometimes we want to pass quickly on our way to the rest of Gospel, but there is that haunting feeling in our stomach that Jesus might be right and we might just be wrong. And that's when we need to stop and take another look at the Beatitudes.

So why did Jesus make these pronouncements? Some believe this to be the ordination sermon for the disciples but, be that as it may, Jesus, gave this sermon as his marching orders for those who would be Christian pilgrims rather than Christian tourists.

So who were these Christian pilgrims or Christian tourists that Jesus was addressing? They were the guilt ridden, the fear ridden, people who were enveloped in malnutrition, people who were terminally ill, there were lepers, every kind of revolutionary objecting to the oppressive and inhumane political system, the bereaved, those who had given up hoping for anything—all of them gathered before Jesus—they were the lost, the last and the losers, standing around this makeshift pulpit in the cathedral of the open sky and Jesus looked at them and said "You are blest. You are blest." In such circumstances what would our reaction be? I suspect we would shout out "Who are you kidding Jesus? Who are you kidding?"

The Beatitudes leave us in no doubt that we are to live generously and graciously towards others—the way God lives towards us. They reverse all our expectations—the expectations that we learn from the world in which things that previously seemed desirable, like status, possessions and money are of secondary importance.

And yet, even in the Beatitudes, when we personalise them to our own situation, what we need to know is that God understands our pain, our poverty, our despair, our fear. All kinds of events can bring us face to face with our own fragility, our mortality, our utter dependence on the One who has given us life. Tragedy can do this—the death of a dear one, old or young. Sudden illness can do it—catastrophe or disappointment, the approach of old age, fear of death, or our emotional wellbeing as Covid-19 shows little sign of abating. We know the problems full well. And the Gospel's guidance is before us. But are we ready to follow it? Our hope lies not in some formula, not in any plan. Our hope lies in a person, in him whose life is our example, whose words are eternal life. He is the one who has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows, and he is there for us all. Yes, even when sometimes we don't feel it, he is there.

And as we reflect on these words spoken 2000 years ago we see in them the life led by countless Saints. But it is fair to say that the idea of Saints is not much in vogue these days. We prefer heroes with all the attending glamour of that designation. We can find them in several venues, sports, business, entertainment, the military.

In many of these examples, heroes are identified by common characteristics, often their aggressiveness and their brashness. In one way or another, the heroes of our time, model for us the ability to triumph one over the other. There is a last man standing sort of ethic.

It is not so with the Saints. Listen to the words of Jesus. Blessed are the poor. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are the peacemakers. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are those who are persecuted for my sake. Blessed are those who look beyond themselves.

There is a striking difference, almost a mirror opposite of the cultural heroes and the notion of the Saints. It matters to recognise this distinction because it causes us to discern who are the Saints in our lives, and it causes us to remember who we are, from whom we came, and who we mark as our heroes, as our Saints. So who are our Saints? Perhaps we find them in hospitals in the Covid-19 Wards where doctors and nurses put their lives at risk tending the sick. Perhaps it's those working in Foodbanks and soup kitchens or those leading the fight to eliminate child poverty. We will all have our own thoughts on who the present day Saints might be but all of this matters when we find ourselves facing a choice of good and evil, or when we have to find our way through a crisis, or when we are trying to live our lives fully, trying to take care of one another, and our community. It matters because it reminds us that the last one standing, stands alone.

And so we honour the saints today, those of the present time and those who have died, not specifically so much for their deeds as for the faith that sustained them, that faith they passed on to us. This matters because now we are the saints, and our challenge is to pass on the ethic and ideal of the kingdom of God as expressed by Jesus—blessed are the merciful, the peacemakers, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness—as lived by Jesus, for others, in faith, in sacrifice—as promised by Jesus—you will be comforted, children of God, given mercy.

And when we do that, when we stand in that faith, under this cloud of witnesses to that faith, then it is not just the last man standing, but all of us standing together, the communion of saints, with one another, for one another, in Christ's name.

Two thousand years have borne out the truth of the Sermon on the Mount. Everyone who hears Jesus's words and acts on them will be like the man who built his house on a rock. No matter the storms, the house did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.

The words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount are so familiar to us now that perhaps we hardly hear them. Yet they are the words of the ultimate affirmation and of the ultimate challenge:

You are the salt of the earth;
You are the light of the world.

Yes, you and me. You and me are the light of the world. So the challenge for us all, is go forth and shine. Go forth and shine. So be it. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Shining God, even the darkness is not dark for you and so today we open our hearts to your world and all its people, bringing our hopes and our fears, and ready to be transformed in our thoughts and in our actions.

God of love, you said "Blessed are those who mourn for they will be comforted". We pray for those whose hearts are sore with grief and sorrow; we remember them in their loss and ask that you would come near to them so that they would know your presence and healing balm.

God of compassion, we pray for our world in the midst of a global pandemic; we pray for your blessing and protection over all engaged in the fight against Covid-19, doctors, nurses, all other front line and support workers and those endeavouring to find a vaccine that will be effective against the illness. We pray also for our leaders in both Westminster and Holyrood that the decisions they make are based on sound advice and that we will have the grace to accept and keep to Government guidelines.

Lord, you said "Blessed are those who are persecuted for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". We bring before you the oppressed, the marginalised, the exploited and downtrodden in our society, the homeless and refugees.

God of mercy, you said "Blessed are the peacemakers". We pray for those suffering from pain, rejection, hunger and war where nations tear themselves apart with civil wars, turning the lives of millions of innocent people upsides down. We pray that you would raise up leaders inspired to bring peace and reconciliation to their countries.

Merciful God, we pray for those who find themselves without work or who fear that redundancy may be coming, who are in financial difficulties without a sense of where their next meal may come from or how their practical and basic needs may be met. Give us generous hearts to respond to their needs so that we may indeed be a light in their lives.

And as we pray for others we pray also for the Saints whose memories are dear to us. And in silence now we bring before you all our concerns

We bring these prayers before you in the knowledge that you can create light out of darkness, hope from cracks of despair, even life out of death and so grant us the spiritual strength you alone have to offer us, the peace you can give us as the world cannot give, the wisdom and assurance we only find in being our truest selves before you our maker, redeemer Lord and King. We offer these prayers in Jesus name who taught us to pray:

*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

HYMN—Shine, Jesus, Shine—CH4 448

Lord, the light of your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining;
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us,
Set us free by the truth you now bring us.
Shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
Fill this land with the Father's glory;
Blaze, Spirit, blaze,
Set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
Flood the nations with grace and mercy;
Send forth your word, Lord,
And let there be light!*

As we gaze on your kingly brightness,
So our faces display your likeness,
Ever changing from glory to glory,
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story.
Shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
Fill this land with the Father's glory;
Blaze, Spirit, blaze,
Set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
Flood the nations with grace and mercy;
Send forth your word, Lord,
And let there be light!*

*Flow, river, flow,
Flood the nations with grace and mercy;
Send forth your word, Lord,
And let there be light!*

BLESSING Let the majesty of the Father be the light by which we walk,
the compassion of the Son be the love by which we walk,
the presence of the Spirit be the power by which we walk.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, this day and evermore. Amen.



Currie Kirk Guild

The next Zoom meeting is Tuesday 3 November at 10 am when Colin Chess will be speaking on “Old Trades of Edinburgh”. Don’t forget to pick up the material that accompanies the talk. Get in touch with Louise if you have not received it.

Meanwhile we are starting to collect chocolate Advent Calendars and Selection Boxes for the Wester Hailes Foodbank. Please leave any donations in GCH for collection by end of November. If you would like me to collect them, please email elf.lamont@blueyonder.co.uk and I will be happy to do so.



Louise Lamont
Guild President

Edinburgh Direct Aid knitting

Good Afternoon Ladies

Congratulations and a big thanks to everyone for all the beautiful knitting which you have continued to do during Lockdown.

EDA were delighted to receive all the newly knitted woollens yesterday.

The numbers were: Hats—871; Jumpers—34; Scarves—20; and several pairs of mittens.

You will recall in March we responded to EDA’s urgent appeal for knitting for the Syrian refugees and adding in those figures our totals for this year are:

Hats—1318; Jumpers—59; Scarves—30. A really wonderful effort.

The Guild will be happy to collect all hats, jumpers, scarves and mittens during September 2021 so:

KEEP KNITTING.

Kindest wishes
Meg.

