

# Starters for Sunday

## *Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost*

**19 October 2014**

The Mission and Discipleship Council offer their thoughts on the nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost.

This week's material, from our archives, was prepared by Rev Roddy Hamilton, Minister of Bearsden: New Kilpatrick.

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## Quick Guide...

*Helping people prepare for reading the Bible in worship can make a real difference. Overcoming nerves, reading in ways suitable to the text, speaking clearly etc.*

You may wish to email these three links to the people reading Scripture on Sunday to support them in their involvement in worship: [Managing your nerves](#); [Creative readings](#); [Worship at the Lectern](#)

### [Exodus 33: 12-23](#)

Here is a passage for church leaders who need a little affirmation from time to time and know that this is the right place for them to be despite the times when everything seems to be going in the wrong direction. Moses has led the people out of Egypt but it has not been plain sailing with a lot of moaning (read Numbers 14:26-35 for God's response to that!), questioning and golden calves. Here Moses asks for and is given reassurance that God is with him. He is given four different reassurances: he is told he has found favour with God, he will be given rest, he has seen God face to face and has seen his glory. Moses seems to need lots of reassurance from the very start of his relationship with God. It would be great to be able to redraw Moses as a worrier, who lies in bed at night awake, who wants to remain friends with everyone. Perhaps the passage does not stretch that far, but it is an insight into Moses' needs and God's encouragement.

### [Matthew 22: 15-22](#)

Here is the old proof text of separating church and state and politics and religion. How would Matthew have responded to such interpretation? It is a decent enough question surely in a land dominated by an oppressing power: what do you do about paying them taxes? Would not we, do not we ask the same question all the time? Jesus' answer seems to be an excellent response to a trick question. It was spoken for that particular moment surely. Can we apply it across the board, however, in all circumstances? Are there not times when it is right to turn over the temple tables and throw out the money changers?

### [1 Thessalonians 1: 1-10](#)

Imagine what it must have been like to live in the first few moments of a new faith and community. That is the context of Thessalonians. Possibly less than a year had passed since



they came together in this Roman dominated world and the persecutions they faced (probably not because they were Christians as there possibly were not enough of them around yet to be a bother to the state). However that newness is also the context for the writer of the letter too for Paul is young in the Christian faith too. It is good to hear words so fresh. Despite this newness the Thessalonians are held up as examples for all across the young church. The word example is one that speaks volumes for the Thessalonians were folk who did not shout about what they had done, but acted out that they had turned from idols and all that that lead to and in that living proclaimed the Good News.

## **Sermon Ideas**

### **Exodus**

Reassurance is something we could focus on more in the church. How many times do we encourage folk in our preaching. The church has a name (which is doesn't deserve) as always telling people what to do. That isn't the reality. Encouragement and affirmation is a great gift to offer people. But it does bring the possibilities of change. In affirming and encouraging those with ideas then that means acting upon those ideas when possible (Thessalonians comes in here talking about acting rather than just saying); encouraging those who are tired by the faith means taking them through the journey to a new relationship with the faith. Indeed in encouraging folk could end up with a healthy community.

### **Matthew**

This passage has little to do with paying taxes in general as the Jews has a number of taxes, including temple tax. This was more focused on paying tax to Caesar. Jesus' answer is ambiguous and illustrates fine debating skills more than an authoritative teaching for all time. Yet it does raise the question still: what is God's? This passage in particular may not answer that clearly but there are many others that perhaps do. And if we change the context slightly: what if the emperor is Apartheid, or a sectarian ruler, or Mugabe, Hitler or Stalin... need we be silent with God's words of justice not just in our words but in our actions too?



## Prayers

Almighty God,  
You sent your Son Jesus Christ  
To be the light of the world  
Free us all from all that darkens and ensnares us,  
And bring us to eternal light and joy;  
Through the power of him  
Who is alive and reigns  
With you and the Holy Spirit,  
One God, now and forever.

### From Thessalonians

May we unfurl our hands  
and hold your world  
O God

May we stretch our steps  
and walk your path  
O God

May we clear our throats  
and speak of love  
O God

That the world may see you  
through us

May our words hold kindness  
and be your blessing to others  
O God



May our acts be gentle  
and be filled with your grace  
O God

May we live lightly here  
and leave your footprints behind  
O God

That the world may recognise you  
in all we do

May our faith find questions  
and call us to your possibility  
O God

May our lives find adventures  
and open up heaven  
O God

May our politics speak of peace  
and shape your justice  
O God

That the world may acknowledge you  
in our every breath

May we be seen  
to be like you  
speak with grace  
about all brokenness  
act with humility  
in every conflict  
respond with love



in every tragedy  
and be the people  
called the body of Christ  
in this world

So be it

Amen

### **Intercession**

Creator,  
In your likeness we long for a world  
where justice is a matter of course  
and peace a way of life  
a kindness taken for granted  
and truth automatic  
and grace abundant  
and love unconditional

But that is not our world  
yet

And so we pray  
placing ourselves in the world  
where conflict is a matter of course  
and work for peace  
in N\_\_\_\_\_

where hatred is taken for granted  
in places of prejudice  
in Scotland  
in our community  
our religion



where spinning the truth is more prevalent than telling it  
in our systems  
in our government  
in our façades

where selfishness is abundant  
rather than grace  
in our lifestyles  
in our decisions that affect others  
in our environment

and where love is conditional  
in our politics  
in our relationships  
in our community

Creator  
may this world reflect more of your image  
through what we do  
towards our neighbour  
our enemy  
the ill  
our family  
those we call brother and sister  
Reflect your image  
that repeat Jesus name

So be it

Amen



**Call To Worship**

Spitting image did it well

And we laughed

Rory Bremner does it well

And we laugh

Dame Edna does it well

And we laugh

Les Dawson didn't do it well

And we laughed

Impersonation is the highest form of flattery

Who are we flattering here?

When we do it

and imitate God

does God laugh?

or does God weep

**Meditative Sequence**

The lectionary has us read Paul's first Thessalonian letter asking us to imitate Christ, and Jesus invites us to recognise where God is. Have you ever wondered about the image of God we imagine ourselves imitating? What kind of God do we believe in?

A different voice reads each story. These are a bit timebound as they were written for this passage three years ago and respond to the Earthquake in Pakistan, the clearance of shantytowns in Zimbabwe by Mugabe and the news of Malawi's huge HIV problems. However it may still be useful for these stories do not go away, they just move context. Or it could be used as a basis of a fresh rewriting in your particular context of finding God in the world this particular week.



During the last stanza the hymn “Bring many names” was played with a soloist singing the first verse immediately after the words and the congregation joining in thereafter.

I saw God last week

very clearly

I saw God

and I hardly recognised her

for her face was hidden behind hands

that buried her face

too exposed to death

and utter grief

She was hunched beside a great slab of fallen house

all but dust after the earthquake

helpless and hopeless

with grief

torn by the shocking loneliness that was now so violently hers

I saw God grieving last week

I don't know if she still does

I saw God last week

vividly

with bright angry eyes

that I hardly recognised

He was frozen by rage

immovable

but where would he go anyway

now his shack has been torn down

in Mugabe's clearance policy

denied by the government

in the same tone a bully laughs

all reason had been bulldozed



all justice stripped away  
and he was helpless with righteous anger  
I saw God thrown out last week  
I don't know where he is now

I saw God last week  
just a glimpse  
dancing a slow dance  
on her own  
all the more lonely  
for the streets were filled with children  
orphaned  
grown up too quickly  
to know anything of hope  
that child's most perfect gift  
because their parents and aunties are now dead  
from Malawi's disease  
from Malawi's hunger  
from Malawi's ill hope  
And God's troubled dance-steps  
reflect in the dry eyes of staring children  
before tiredness closes them once more  
I saw God dance last week  
I don't know if she is still does

I saw God last week  
on streets, abused  
in homes, forgotten  
in conflict, ignored  
in silence, unbroken  
I saw God



in neighbours, unknown  
in life, hard lived  
in religion, unaffected  
I saw God  
and he was different from all the creeds I know  
for he wore no power  
controlled no armies of heaven  
The God of all omnipotence  
who set rain and sunshine on their course  
who shaped the world  
and breathed life into it  
sat broken  
stood helpless  
danced one last time  
I hardly recognised him  
but I saw God last week.



## Time with children



You might find the [Reader's Reactions](#) review of Bob Hartman's '[Bible stories through the year: lectionary readings for year A, retold for maximum effect](#)' useful for your Time with Children.

### Exodus

You could have a discussion about who you go to when you are feeling down and what those people say to you. How do they encourage you? How would you encourage other people? What are your favourite encouraging words? Write some of your own of strips of paper and hand them out and invite everyone to give someone today an encouraging word. Relate the story of Moses commenting that even the people that seem the strongest and most certain need encouragement, and God has words to give us all that tell us how much we are loved.

### Thessalonians

Act out in charade fashion an act that encourages or helps someone (carrying someone's heavy bag, giving them a cup of tea, shaking hands or a hug). Whoever guesses correctly invite them to lead the next one. They can think on up themselves or you could give them a suggestion. Here is a great litany (list) of what it is to be God's People. Reflect on the passage where Paul talks about turning our faith into action and how that builds up the community. Can we use some of these this week at school, in our families, in the church?

### Musical Suggestions

CH4 59	O come and let us to the Lord
CH4 523	Hands to work and feet to run
CH4 134	Bring many names
CH4 625	O thou who camest from above
CH4 742	Rejoice in God's saints



## Additional Resources

### Resourcing Mission



[Resourcing Mission](#) is host to Starters for Sunday and other key mission resources for download and purchase. Online booking is available for [Mission & Discipleship events](#). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. If there is something you'd like to see on this new site, please [contact us](#) via the website.

### Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in prayers. [Revealing Love](#) is available now from [St Andrew Press](#).



### Music Resources

The hymns mentioned in this material are ideas of specific hymns you might choose for this week's themes. However, for some excellent articles on church music and ideas for new music resources, please check out our online music pages [Different Voices](#).

### Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might preach this Sunday. [Preachers Perspectives](#) is a resource where we have asked twelve preachers to share the insights they have gathered through their experiences of writing and delivering sermons regularly.

### Scots Worship Resources

[The Kirk's Ear](#) - Scots in the Kirk series for Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Pentecost and other times of the year

[Wurship Ouk bi Ouk](#) - Metrical psalms, hymns, prayers and words for worship

[Scots Sacraments](#) may give you helpful material if you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism.

*The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to the Rev Roddy Hamilton for providing us with this Sunday's material.*

*Please note that the views expressed in these materials are those of the individual writer and not necessarily the official view of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.*

