

# starters for Sunday

## ***Twenty-Second Sunday after Pentecost***

**20<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

Rev John Whiteford, minister of Newlands South offers his thoughts on the twenty first Sunday after Pentecost.

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### [Jeremiah 31: 27-34](#)

This passage in Jeremiah has long been used in Christian tradition to point forward to Jesus as the new covenant. Particularly in Hebrews 8-10 where the author quotes this passage to link Jesus and the new covenant. Soards Dozeman and McCabe in *Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary*, however, point out the “social context and theological horizon” of both books is very different.

Some of the premises in this passage are new, some are not. The Deuteronomical law was always meant to be internalised (written in their hearts), and God has always been able to forgive. Jeremiah does see something new in this covenant. God cannot be limited by tradition or orthodoxy – but is free to act in surprising ways.

### [Psalm 119: 97-104](#)

This entire psalm is a meditation on the Torah. The commandments of the Torah when kept diligently make the psalmist wiser than enemies, more perceptive than his teachers and more discerning than the elders.

The part of this psalm can be used as a response to the new covenant set out in Jeremiah. The psalmist tells how the Torah has been internalised and the emphasis is that those who follow the teaching of the Torah faithfully will understand better than enemies, teachers and elders.



## [2 Timothy 3: 14-4: 5](#)

Timothy is urged to loyalty and steadfastness. God's way written in the heart, absorbed into the being leads to active service.

The task of Timothy is to proclaim the good news of the saving power of Christ in every way possible.

Timothy is urged: to be faithful to what was learned in childhood. Reminded as to the godly value of scripture, he is told to teach and preach with persistence. He is warned of the danger of rebellious people and false teachers, and those who abandon truth. There is a final charge to faithful ministry. Surely one of the best proofs of faith is a faithful life.

Note that for the writer of 2 Timothy faith is focused on Jesus Christ. Scripture is a vital part of faith, but it is not the object of faith. Salvation is found in a trusting relationship with Christ.

## [Luke 18: 1-8](#)

This parable of the judge and the widow is particular to Luke. It is part of the final part of Jesus journey towards Jerusalem. From Luke 17: 11 - 19: 27 the themes of "discipleship" and "hope in God's future" are at the heart of these passages.

Jesus tells us to "pray always and not to lose heart" – central themes of this passage. Jesus tells the story of the judge who fears neither God, nor has respect for people. In one sense, the judge is independent and is controlled by no one. He does not care about God's justice, kindness, humility or love, and he is not bothered about other people's opinions. He appears to care about nothing – but he is irritated by this widow's persistence (who perhaps feared God and respected persons). So it seems just to avoid being troubled – he grants her justice. Jesus point seems to be if this judge who in so many ways is objectionable can give someone justice – how much more can we trust God to do right by those that he loves.

What should be taken from this parable? Christian faith is profoundly related to the future, but it is also thoroughly rooted in the present. We are encouraged to pray for those things that we truly want, and to strengthen our relationship to God. We also look forward to the time when God will fully realise his commitment to justice.



## Sermon Notes

1. Living in a materialistic secular world it is very easy for Christians to lose heart. We are bombarded in the media about scandals in the church and the evils of religion. There is an aggressive atheism that pours scorn on faith and the spiritual life. What gives Christians hope is that the power for faithful living does not come from our own efforts, but from a living relationship with God. Like all relationships it has to be nurtured, strengthened, made real. It is important for those who come to church faithfully that worship and prayer are vital to sustaining faith for that is where the power for living comes from. Through an interaction with God we are given the strength to overcome the 'discouraging fare of daily life'.
2. On the voyage which resulted in the discovery of America, Columbus refused to listen to the threats of his sailors. As day after day, no land appeared the sailors, threatened to mutiny and demanded that they turn back. Columbus would not listen and each day entered two words in the ship's log "Sailed on".
3. We are told that at the top of every music manuscript of the great Johann Sebastian Bach appear the two Latin words "IESU, IUVA!" – "Jesus, help!" The world's mightiest master of music did not dare place his fingers on the keyboard or compose a single melody without first calling on his Lord for help.
4. The work of Amnesty International has kept the plight of prisoners of conscience throughout the world, to the fore. Even more importantly, it has brought them hope when many would have been forgotten. Local groups write letters, contact people, publicise the plight of people held, sometimes merely because they have resisted a government. "Phoning the police, faxing a protest, signing a postcard – all these things make a difference because they send a clear message... I believe that the phone calls to the police in Zimbabwe during my arrest saved me from torture and rape..." Jennie Williams, WOZA Human Rights Organisation (Women of Zimbabwe Arise). Persistence in the cause of justice makes a difference.



5. We are called to pray always and not to lose heart. We do this because God is faithful, and his justice and love will ultimately prevail. Prayer is not just a private personal matter where we have a wish list of things that we want God to meet. It is a communal activity of the church – liturgy, we remember means the work of the people. What does it mean to rediscover prayer as the Church’s expression of faith in the ultimate goodness of God?
  
6. My brother-in-law’s granddaughter was born and brought up in USA. She is 4 years old and when he went to visit her in the States and was asking her questions about what she did, her friends and her thoughts – she responded (and you have to say this in an American accent) “Grand-dad you’re bothering me!” with a long drawl on the “o” of bothering! Maybe we have to “bother” God more – to renew that connection, make real the relationship and listen to his still small voice.



## Time with Children

Ask the children if they know of a bird that spends the summer in Scotland, and in September and October starts the long journey back to Africa. Many of them go to South Africa. A distance from Glasgow of about 6,000 miles. They fly over the Sahara desert covering about 200 miles a day – feeding on way (see RSPB website on migrating swallows). Difficult journey, I am tired, thinking about it, many dangers – but they persist. They persevere.

Could tell story of Robert the Bruce, beaten in battle, took refuge in lonely cave – lost heart, about to give up. Saw a spider trying to climb up a slender thread to its web – but it kept falling back. Eventually it made it. The King was given courage to persevere.

Ask children if they have found something difficult at first (playing piano, riding a bike, swimming, maths). Did they keep on trying and were able to do it? Get them to tell story if they are willing.

When it comes to prayer, not easy – God has promised to hear our prayers. It is easy to become distracted, do we need a special language? What words do we use? Does not always turn out the way we want it – but Jesus tells us to persevere – because God hears our prayers.



## Prayers

### Collect

Almighty and ever-living God,  
increase in us your gift of faith,  
that forsaking what lies behind  
and reaching out to what is before,  
we may run the way of your commandments  
and win the crown of everlasting joy;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
who lives and reigns  
with you and the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Prayer

Loving God we gather in your presence today

Still our hearts that we may rest in you

Quieten our minds that in “being”, we may truly be who we are, and we may sense the power of your healing love.

We come here today from the world whose siren song tells us that we do not have enough – we do not buy enough – we are not enough.

Teach us anew the wisdom of your heart, Lord God that security comes from your unending love for us.

Centre us once again, Holy God. Ground us in your love that we may know life in all its fullness, through you.



Blessed God, we pray for 'our daily bread', for what we need

May we be content, still our worrying hearts

In our fear that there might not be enough

We grasp more than we need,

In our hope to avoid trouble

We seek security in things.

Forgive us our anxieties

Forgive us when we forget the needs of others

Forgive us when we do not seek our safety in you,

Unclench our hands,

Open our hearts

God is our refuge and our strength and forgives us all our shortcomings

May we worship God in joy and in trust, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

## **2<sup>nd</sup> Prayer**

Loving God, you are always ready to love and accept us – always more ready to hear than we are to pray. Make us open to your call, to know your presence within us. Enable us to know your peace and to live and work for your kingdom. Thank you Lord God for your spirit that leads us to reach out to others with openness and trust, for that is how we experience your love for us.

Open our Spirits, Lord, to recognise your wisdom

calling us not to stand still.

not to believe in static truth,

but to seek understanding in relationships,

to find love in action,



to achieve justice in engagements.

Open our ears that we may hear the cries for peace and equality and move towards them.

Lord God we pray for our judicial system,

that it may act with impartiality

and freedom from interference.

We pray for the Police, upholders of law and order,

for sheriffs and lawyers – those who work with children’s hearing system.

For social workers and probation officers, all who seek to be supportive and even handed.

We pray for areas where there is injustice and a lack of freedom.

For all who suffer wrongfully and all who are oppressed.

We give thanks for all who have shared their wisdom and learning with us.

We pray for teachers, tutors and lecturers those who teach and lead in church setting.

Help us to listen, and be sensitive and open to others.

May we above all hear the call of your voice, drawing us nearer, accompanying our journey, strengthening our faith, encouraging us to reach out.

We remember in our prayers those who are finding life difficult, through ill health, because they are sad or they have something to face this week..... in the silence we remember them.....

And for ourselves in the week ahead

Keep us faithful, active in our service,

Willing to see where you will lead Lord God.

We offer our prayers and our thoughts for others in Jesus name.

Amen



## Prayers of People

*Based on Luke 18:1-8 from "Seasons of Spirit"*

Creator of justice and covenant

Hear the prayers of those who cry

"Grant me justice"

In our homes and our churches

In our histories, both personal and political

In our communities and countries

And in our world

We lift up these voices now...

Hear them, O God of Israel

God of Judah

God of creation and humanity

And tune our hearts to hear those whose voices have been silenced

Tune our hearts in this silence...



## Musical Suggestions

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| CH4 129 | The Lord is King                                       |
| CH4 79  | Teach me, O lord, the perfect way                      |
| CH4 172 | Sing for God's glory that colours the dawn of creation |
| CH4 21  | Lord, teach me all your ways                           |
| CH4 359 | He came down that we may have love                     |
| CH4 493 | It's me, it's me, O Lord                               |
| CH4 710 | 'I have a dream', a man once said                      |
| CH4 253 | Inspired by love and anger                             |
| CH4 283 | The voice of God goes out to all the world             |
| CH4 473 | 'Thy Kingdom come!' - on bended knee                   |
| CH4 604 | Holy wisdom, lamp of learning                          |
| CH4 706 | For the healing of the nations                         |



## Additional Resources

### Resourcing Mission



[www.resourcingmission.org.uk](http://www.resourcingmission.org.uk) is host to Starters for Sunday as well as key mission resources from the Church of Scotland, for download and purchase, and has an online booking facility for Mission & Discipleship events (eg National Youth Assembly). Please check back regularly, as new items are being added all the time. We welcome all feedback so if there is something you'd like to see on this new site that isn't already there, please use the 'Website Feedback' option on the '[Contact Us](#)' page.

### Prayer Resources

These materials are designed to be a starting point for what you might look for in Prayers. You may also be interested in looking at our publication **Pray Now 2013**. Please click [here](#).



### 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 magazine **Different Voices** which can be found on our Resourcing Mission website [here](#).

### Preaching Resources



These materials are designed to be a starting point for **what** you might preach this Sunday. If you would be interested in looking at our free materials on **how** you might preach, please click [here](#) to see our

[Preachers Perspectives](#) web page 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 i 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](#) If you are celebrating Communion or have a Baptism you may find some helpful materials here

*The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to express its thanks to Rev John Whiteford 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.*

