

Starters for Sunday

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

27 July 2014

The Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Alan Hamilton-Messer, Associate Minister of Queensferry and Dalmeny Parish Churches for his thoughts on the seventh Sunday after Pentecost.

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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](#)

Prologue

Our readings this week reflect God's love for His people. They show how God works through our difficult times and will often bless us through them. He works through and within our times of weakness and works for the good of all who love Him. Blessing and prosperity are offered to all who serve the Lord. We are promised that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God.

[Genesis 29: 15-28](#)

In this reading we see that even though Jacob was deceived by Laban God brought a double blessing from the deception. Jacob obviously trusted Laban and never once thought that he would exchange one daughter for another. Jacob met Rachel first while she is tending her father's sheep. He tells her and her father who he is and who his mother is, identifying himself as Rebekah's son but never as Isaac's son. And he spends a month with them before he brings up the subject of marriage. At some point during that month Jacob decided that he wanted Rachel, but the text tells us nothing about their relationship or her feelings for Jacob. In our reading, the story is told from Jacob's perspective. Jacob is described as being in love with Rachel, so much so that when he is frustrated in his desire to marry her, he carries her for a total of fourteen years that pass in the blink of an eye for him. The story has no interest in Rachel's or Leah's lives or experience of those years. Rachel's feelings for Jacob are never described.



[Psalm 105: 1-11, 45](#)

This is the first of a series of "Confitemini Domino" Psalms, meaning "O give thanks unto the Lord".

This Psalm makes a point of stirring our emotions so that we may ourselves praise God. That we should seek his strength; that is, his grace; the strength of his Spirit to work good things in us. Things that we can't do in our own strength but only through His strength. It encourages us to seek his favour to eternity, but also to continue seeking it while living in this world; for he will not only be found, but he will reward those that diligently seek him.

Psalm 105 reminds us very clearly that God will remember His covenant with Jacob which should inspire us to have faith.

[Romans 8: 26-39](#)

Our reading in Romans promises that God Himself will help us in our times of weakness, and there will be many. These verses contain that so encouraging quotation "If God is for us who can stand against us". We are much more than conquerors and nothing will ever separate us from God's love.

It includes some of the most familiar and comforting words we have from the apostle Paul. Nearly every sentence is a new way of stating the promise that God has not abandoned "us," and is working on our behalf. The text has three units, and any one of them could be the basis of a sermon. Together, they offer a look into the way God's love bursts forth into action over time.

"Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness," Paul writes in Romans 8:26. The language of these first two verses has more in common with what preceded than what follows them. As the Spirit had helped us to cry, "Abba, Father," (Romans 8:16), so also the Spirit helps us pray when we do not know what to pray.



[Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52](#)

In this parable the Kingdom of Heaven is compared to a thing, a treasure. It was "hidden". Yet close at hand. The Word of God and its Good News are available to mankind but is completely hidden and meaningless until God Himself reveals the meaning.

This man found it quite accidentally. But we are told that he buried it again. This does not mean that it was meaningless to him but that he prized it very highly. He himself is very happy. The last part of this verse means that the treasure of the Gospel (the Kingdom of Heaven) means much more to him than all else. He had found the righteousness of God which came to him by faith, quite apart from works and human worthiness. In his curiosity merely to see Jesus, Jesus found him.

Sermon Ideas

A short sermon outline

In our Old Testament Lesson for this morning: Jacob gets fooled.

Jacob had literally ruined and wrecked his life.

He had deceived and lied to his father to steal the blessing and inheritance from his brother Esau.

Esau had threatened his life, and now Jacob was on the run.

But the most marvellous thing had happened to Jacob was when he saw God's Stairway to Heaven!

He had experienced an encounter with the Living God.

God had confronted Jacob, and led him to make a new commitment--a vow that the Lord, the God of redemption and salvation, would always be His God!

God gave Jacob a new life, a new beginning, a fresh start, a brand new day to live!

Immediately after Jacob had his encounter with God, Jacob began to search for what was to become his new family!



Do you remember how it felt when you were converted and began a new life, and made a commitment to God. When this happens to us, we need to do exactly what Jacob did. We need to search for our new family--the family of God, the family of the church. Because we need each other's fellowship, help, and encouragement! We need to join together in studying God's Word.

Anyway, back to Jacob. He went to his mother's brother... a slightly weird man named Laban, the brother of Rebekah, the grandson of Nahor, was overjoyed to welcome one of his own flesh and blood and perhaps Laban was impressed by the strength of Jacob, and thought he might make a good shepherd. And almost certainly, Laban thought Jacob might be a possible husband for one of his two daughters. Leah and Rachel were both eligible, and Laban never missed an opportunity to drive a hard bargain. Jacob fell in love with one of Laban's two daughter's Rachel.

Rachel was unusually beautiful and attractive. On the other hand, Leah, the elder sister, wasn't so attractive. So Jacob made an agreement to work for Laban for 7 years in return for Rachel's hand in marriage. Laban was offering Jacob a home and a job. So Jacob worked seven long, hard years for Rachel, but they were joyful years! The years seemed like only a few days because of the great love he had for her. In our Gospel reading from Matthew 13: 31-33, 44-52 Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven *"is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought it."*

Have we sold all we have in order to obtain the kingdom of heaven?

Are we willing to do anything in order to get it?

If not, we ought to re-evaluate how much we love God...

... do we love God enough to do anything in order to inherit eternal life with Him?

Now, after 7 years of hard work, there was a shocking interruption to Jacob's joy!

Jacob had been deceived! Jacob reaped exactly what he had sown back home among his father and brother! On the wedding night, Jacob gets an unexpected wedding present--Rachel's sister Leah!

Back in Jacob's time, there was a custom of heavily veiling the bride on her wedding night. After being heavily veiled, the bride was presented to the bridegroom after darkness had fallen. So it



is not surprising that Jacob discovers the trick Laban played on him only when the morning came. When Jacob woke up on the morning after his wedding with Leah rather than Rachel. A lot of men might have said, “Forget it! I’m not going to work another 7 years for Rachel,” and then stormed off! But Jacob loved her, and she alone was the prize that he sought! Jacob kept his focus on the one he loved not the 7 additional years of work not the injustice of his father-in-law! Now, Jacob kept Leah even after he was able to finally marry Rachel and Leah became the mother of Jacob’s first four sons which includes Levi and Judah who is the ancestor of David and his royal line, and ultimately of Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord!

It’s amazing how things work out for those who love God and are called according to His purpose!

Time with Children

Kids Talk: I ain’t lost

Have you ever met a really bossy person? Perhaps someone who doesn’t say please and just demands things? Well there was a man just like this who was travelling to an important meeting. He decided to take a short cut and found himself completely lost. He asked the first person he saw, a young boy, for directions. “Hey, Boy,’ he shouted ‘which way to Edinburgh?”

“I don't know,” the boy replied, a little embarrassed.

“Well, then,” the man demanded, “How far is it to Glasgow?”

“I don't know that either,” the boy answered.

The man was getting angry and raised his voice. “Is there someone around here who can give me directions, then?” “I don't know.” said the boy.

The man's questions got angrier as the boy kept responding with the same answer.

“I don’t know.”

Finally the man lost his temper and shouted, “Well you don't know much, do you!”

Then for the first time, the boy smiled and said,

“No... but I ain't lost!”



There are a lot of things we don't know. But if we have faith in Jesus, we aren't lost.

Life is a bit of a mystery for us right now, and we have probably got a lot of unanswered questions.

Even though we don't know everything, we aren't discouraged or feeling lost.

Someday, when we see Jesus, everything will become clear.

Meanwhile, we can relax knowing that God is in control.

If Jesus lives in our hearts we aren't lost, we're saved.

Prayers

Collect

O God, the protector of all who trust in you,
without you nothing is strong, nothing is holy.
Increase and multiply upon us your mercy,
that with you as our ruler and guide,
we may so pass through things temporal,
that we lose not the things eternal;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever and ever.

Prayer of approach, confession and Lord's Prayer

Father God we gather today to celebrate your glory. For in you alone can we put our trust; you alone protect and forgive your people, you alone nurture our life and our faith. Receive our prayers and praise. Loving God, you offer us so many good things out of the abundance of your love.

Your steadfast love is better than life. Yet we labour for, and spend our money on, things which can never truly satisfy us. We ask your forgiveness for our selfishness, our lack of love, for the times we turn away from the needs of others and away from your face.



Remind us again how you alone can satisfy us; help us to seek and find you and call upon you now, when you are near.

Lord's Prayer

Amen

Prayers of thanksgiving and for others

Father God, we thank You for Your acceptance and healing. For all the resources and riches that fill our lives we offer praise. For the entwining of our lives and the capacity to think for ourselves, we thank You for our personalities and the characteristics of others, that offer visions of Your presence. We pray for a world where all may know hope and a sense of belonging to the wonder of Your creation.

We pray for the healing of creation. As the stewards of all that surrounds us, teach us to be careful with our world. Help us to start with ourselves and to think about the use of energy and the journey our food makes to our plates. We pray for the healing of nations. Nations that are divided by war, by wealth and poverty, and by race and culture.

May all people learn to respect the values and hopes of others, and in working with others, may we shape a world where peace and justice are more than a hope, and instead part of ordinary living.

In Jesus name.

Musical Suggestions

CH4 196	Come, now is the time to worship.
CH4 235	God is working His purpose out
CH4 641	Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
CH4 442	Blessing and honour
CH4 459	Crown Him with many crowns



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. [Pray Now 2013](#) is available now from [St Andrew Press](#). [Revealing Love](#) will be available to purchase from November 2013.



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](#).

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

[Worship 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 Alan Hamilton-Messer 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.

