

Starters for Sunday

Third Sunday after Pentecost

29 June 2014

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

This week's material, from our archives, was prepared by Rev John Oswald, Interim Minister (North East Scotland).

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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](#).

[Genesis 22: 1-14](#)

One of the most dramatic of the stories of the old Testament that of Abraham's final test by God where he is to offer his only son Isaac as sacrifice despite the promise made to him of offspring who would be more numerous than the grains of sand or the stars of the night sky. This story has many interpretations. On one level, it is a sparsely told tale of deep faith with the drama somehow muted, waiting for exposition. On another, the totalitarian demands of God leave the humans at a total loss. Or is the story telling of the expectation by God of a total subjection to him before we can live the life he would have us live? Or again, maybe the story is telling us that Abraham, like the rest of us, needed a reminder of the faith he had placed in God and this was it. Of course, this is a faith which we fail to match by hundreds of fold. Here too we can see Abraham being asked to make the greatest sacrifice other than his own life and being willing to do so until he is spared the need, while we know of another who was asked even greater things that we might be saved. The sparseness of the telling makes it easy to remember and to tell around the camp fire, or the hearth, and to pass on to the children.

[Psalm 13](#)

How often in the pastoral round do we find the lament of the first lines of this psalm being suppressed because they are thought to be in some way heretical to even think. How reassuring then to find the psalmist railing against the neglectful God though the real comfort comes in the continuing faith shown in the later part of the psalm. We have no idea what obstacle the psalmist was encountering, but we find comfort in knowing we are not the first to have these thoughts.



[Romans 6: 12-23](#)

C H Dodd in the Moffatt commentary describes this section of the epistle as a series of imperatives driving home the necessity of working out ethically all that is involved in being in Christ. Helpfully he describes this in the phrase “become what you are”. Those who are baptised are surely open to the salvation brought by Christ, but they still are prone to sin and Paul is exhorting them to realise that there is still some commitment and change for the Christian to make on their own to fulfil their calling to be in union with Christ our Lord. The analogy with slavery is somewhat lost on our generation who have no direct experience of being the absolute possession of another human being and being considered as no more than a piece of furniture, or another chattel. The slavery of sin has now been lifted and we are free to attach ourselves to a different master through whom we find eternal life.

[Matthew 10: 40-42](#)

This passage has parallels in Luke (10:16) and Mark (9:37) where the authors interpret the saying and its context somewhat differently. In Matthew it is clearly about the acceptance of those who are going about God’s work by those who receive the disciples, and for the disciples themselves to see what importance lies in the “one who sent me”. The idea behind this is that an ambassador is representative of the nation or the government who sent him. So Jesus is the representative of the father and to receive him, to take him into your confidence is to take God himself to yourself. Here again there is a reward to be found in the receiving of the ambassador as the one who sent him. We know this reward to be the eternal life and the acceptance of Jesus as the ambassador of God is to know that we are accepted. So we should accept those who we meet in Christ’s name as ambassadors of him and as we go about our lives we are acting wholly as his ambassadors too. Therein lies a great responsibility similar in scale to the demands made by God on Abraham and similar in its dedication to God as that demanded of the Romans by Paul.



Sermon Ideas

There is little doubt that our level of commitment to God and his cause is the theme running through today's texts. Abraham set the bar pretty high when he was prepared to sacrifice his 'only' son Isaac. Paul is more realistic in his recognition of our weakness and our continuing failure to respond to the baptism into which we have been brought. He calls upon us to respond and builds an increasingly clear picture of what would make a real difference to our lives.

From the Matthew text one could develop on the theme of welcome – welcoming Christ into our lives as one would a guest into our homes.

Prayers

Scripture sentence

Be generous to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4: 32) Common Order p 677

Collect

Almighty God

you have taught us through your Son
that love fulfils the law.

Grant us grace to love you

with all our heart,

all our soul,

all our mind,

all our strength,

and to love our neighbour as ourselves;

through Jesus Christ our Lord,

who lives and reigns

with you and the Holy Spirit, one God,

now and forever. Common Order p 677



Prayers of approach and confession

Praise the Lord you that are his servants, praise the name of the Lord and as we come into your presence we bow low before you in all your majesty and glory.

We give thanks for your constant presence, as a guide and challenger to Abraham, and as a constant companion to your Son Our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through your Spirit we pray that your presence continues today and we place our trust and our faith in you.

We wonder at your faithfulness in the face of our lack of it.

At every point we stray from the path you showed us in the life and constancy of Jesus.

If we are called to own you and to express our faith in our actions we fail more often than not.

If we are tested as Abraham we never reach the mark.

Yet you listen for our confession and grant us forgiveness as we truly repent.

Prayers of thanksgiving and Intercession.

Lord God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob we give you thanks from the bottom of our hearts for the example of the fathers of why faith was, and is, and will be important to the end of time. Your faith towards those who follow you knows no bounds, nor your grace to us. Knowing this we bring before you those of your people in need of your care at this time...

Time with Children

If the welcome theme is chosen one can ask children what is the purpose of a 'welcome' mat at the door of a home? Developing the twin themes of cleaning the feet (as the last supper) and the welcome into God's house, including having a welcoming attitude to those around you.



Musical Suggestions

CH4 114	O threefold God of tender unity
CH4 153	Great is thy Faithfulness
CH4 154	O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder (How Great Thou Art)
CH4 171	Take up the song, and sing the praise of God
CH4 270	Put all your trust in God
CH4 351	Jesus' hands were kind hands, doing good to all (suitable for children)
CH4 360	Jesus Christ is waiting
CH4 362	Heaven shall not wait
CH4 413	The day of resurrection!
CH4 443	He Is Lord
CH4 502	Take my life, Lord let it be
CH4 513	Courage, brother! Do not stumble
CH4 534	Make me a captive Lord
CH4 571	All my being, and all that I possess
CH4 685	For everyone born, a place at the table
CH4 694	Brother, sister, let me serve you
Short songs	
CH4 754	Be still and know that I am God
CH4 763	God bless to us our bread
CH4 792	Our God is a God who makes friends (suitable for children)



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 John Oswald 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.

