

starters for Sunday

7th July 2013

Seventh Sunday After Pentecost

Rev Robin McHaffie, Minister, Linton, Morebattle, Howman and Yetholm Parish Church gives his thoughts on this week's lectionary.

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[2 Kings 5:1-17](#)

This reading from 2nd Kings King is a gift for a story teller. Simply to recount the tale through the eyes of a contemporary would bring to life one of the most evocative tales of the Elisha/Elijah prophet years. It is all here – military might and arrogance, human trafficking and a victim becoming evangel, the attempt to purchase a cure from a flustered and frightened monarch – the humiliation of the great warrior in the magic remedy, the eventual acceptance of free grace. What we could do with this!

One should not minimise the influence of these stories or the personality of Elijah/Elisha on the cult, on Judaism, Islam and Jesus contemporaries. These stories greatly shaped our faith and if you reflect on this, an example is the appearance at the Transfiguration of Elijah and some parallel use of props by Jesus as wonder worker and miracle maker. For Elisha, this healing was a sign that there was a prophet in Israel and for Jesus these ‘signs’ were for our weakness to evidence the coming kingdom – or intrusion of the kingdom now.

If you would like to pick up on a parallel, a trip down our own history finds our most famous military leader, Robert the Bruce, succumbing to Leprosy in 1329. A little research might be fruitful. (Barrow, Robert the Bruce, 4th edition pp34/35 and quoted in Wikipedia) The film Braveheart, in a fictionalised version, gives the Leprosy to his father, Robert de Brus, 6th Lord of Annandale and in a brilliant piece of acting by Angus McFadyen offers a study of the stigmatisation of the disease by linking its progress to the progress of his Machiavellian intrigue from a room in a tower becoming more and more cloaked.

[Psalm 30](#)

We could use this Psalm to reinforce the sense of thanksgiving of being ‘delivered’ from a serious illness. Anyone who has been given a serious diagnosis and then survived that illness knows full well the heights and depths of emotions, the rollercoaster of rising and falling with each stage of a cancer journey for example.



Embedded in the Psalm is one of those wonderful questions of the Almighty – what is gained if I go to the pit? In his book *Wisdom and Worship* Robert Davidson (p59) reminds us of the powerful presence of death in the midst of life –through the presence of life threatening illnesses for example.

Shoel, the pit, or hell, are very present realities for many people. Is this a search for meaning in the midst of life and death (Davidson 58) or a celebration of meaning in the newness of life as one rediscovers the world following a near death experience?

Or

[Isaiah 66:10-14](#)

These verses end the poetic section of Zion as a wife and a mother prior to the more gory apocalyptic imagery that concludes the Book of Isaiah. This is a joyful family celebration of deliverance. It has been awaited long - they are still in the days of waiting – the return of Yahweh to the temple is long overdue. We have no idea of the abominations that keep him away, but whatever they were they were rife. Yet, following Von Rad, (p247) third Isaiah picks up the hope of the imminent advent of Yahweh to the city.

The New Jerusalem is portrayed as a loving and bountiful mother whose breasts of consolation will satisfy her children in the milk that will delight with the abundance of her glory – this is the New Jerusalem – it is mother – it is she – it has breasts for abundant providence – she is clearly female bringing life in abundance.

[Galatians 6:1-18](#)

Galatians, as you know, is thought to be Paul's earliest letter to his church in what is now southern central Turkey. He visited here in his first missionary journey and at least twice subsequently. The main theme of salvation by faith is occasioned by the appearance of groups who were teaching that Christians must keep the Jewish law including circumcision.

When we come to Chapter 6 he is summing up, concluding and offering practical consequences and pastoral advice following the previous theological discourse that faith in Jesus alone is needed to restore our relationship with God.



He has written powerfully on the 'new creation', given us that beautiful passage on fruits of the Spirit and now for some pastoral and practical advice.

The lectionary brackets off verses 1-6, but it is important that we at least look at them in preparation as they lead to and make sense of his hand written epilogue.

There is a distinction made between 'you' who live by the spirit and those who have fallen away – but it is far from absolute and there is a sense that, there but for the grace of God go 'you'. We are to gently seek and recover those who have been tempted (trespassed or stepped aside and this verse can reflect back on to the Lord's Prayer quite easily) In being asked to look to ourselves there is given a picture of sin and weakness as a common burden in a closely knit community. This is why these verses are important to the sense of the epilogue as this bearing of one another's burdens leads to fulfilling the law of Christ.(Verse 2) This is in contrast to the law of Moses and the Judaizers. As Christ bore our burdens on the Cross we bear one another's burdens as a kind of final tick on fulfilling Christ's requirements from us. The collaborative nature of these passages as opposed to the individualism of today cannot be stressed enough within the Church. Now adding a corrective Paul it seems to me is suggesting that those strong in faith – leadership perhaps – carry their own load and then he corrects that with what commentators generally believe is the suggestion that those who are teaching should receive financial support from the community. (Verse 6) (Guthrie D, p 145)

The above leads into the epilogue beginning at verse 11 which is a note in Paul's own hand – in big letters. I think he is shouting this – most commentators speculate on eyesight. He is trying to unmask the Judaizers motivation. He plays on the term outward signs – (outwardly = in the flesh) of keeping within the cult and avoiding persecution perhaps by the marks of circumcision. This is contrasted with Paul's wounds and suffering in service and the spiritual signs of faith.. His spiritual boasting in the cross emerges again here and leads to a profound but very coded passage on the eschatological significance of the new creation – the real manifestation of the Spirit. (Carson et al)

To sum up we have the importance of a life for each other in the Spirit, bearing one another's burdens, teaching and learning, caring for each other and doing good (to agathon – probably



acts of spiritual and material kindness – Guthrie p148) leading to the real manifestation of faith as the complete new creation in the cross of Christ.

16/17/18 to me seem a unit and the lectionary clips the last two verses – they are well worth a little personal reflection – peace on those who walk by the rule is salutary and perhaps rather obvious as a conclusion but the whole blessing is so intensely pastoral and personal and symbolic of the apostolic church that it questions a lot of our current liturgical conclusions to worship.

[Luke 10:1-20](#)

Two millennia later we could be forgiven for forgetting the urgency around in the first century as the kingdom of God was at hand and in the apocalyptic literature there was an expectation of imminent arrival of the eschaton when one would be plucked from a field and another left. So it should be no surprise that in Luke's version of the sending out the urgency of the task brooks no salute on the road or any normal attention to eastern etiquette. They were to leave behind any scruples about food and ritual – get on with the task and focus on it. The urgency is underscored if you read the preceding verses about hand to the plough, or the dead burying the dead.

As a congregation we set out on pilgrimage on Fridays through April and into May along St Cuthbert's Way. We left Monteviot Chapel on the second Friday with this passage in our ears. My colleague who offered it said others had to ask me why they had to salute no-one. He must have picked up and offered that those on Royal business were charged with not saluting anyone on the road. I took his word for that. 2000 odd years later we thought it quite important to engage with those we met on the road. There was no great sense of urgency as we ambled along the Tweed. We were following the path of a great pastor and Bishop who walked into the hills to take that very same message of salvation 800 years later and would survive on the frugal hospitality of hill folk in the Cheviots. Another 1200 on and we had the benefit of Gore-Tex, flasks and a warm bath to go home to.



The commentaries make much of Luke being the only one to record this number of 70 or 72. Following Caird (Galatians) it is seen as symbolic of the nations or/and of the 70/72 Moses used as Assistants. Caird asks us not to think that the 'others' are other than the disciples but 'other' than the messengers of 9.52. They are sent to proclaim the real presence of the Kingdom and by acts of healing and wonder evidence the facticity of the Kingdom that is 'already and not yet' whether people like it or not. A church set in the friction of aggressive atheism may well take succour from this passage. The judgement upon the world is pronounced and communities are called to be part of the New Israel or perish. The opposition is gathering forces and the disciples step out as lambs into the midst of the wolf-like forces gathering to oppose the son of Man. While they are away Jesus has a vision that Satan is falling – better to take that figuratively rather than literally.

They return ecstatic with the stories of the powers of the miracles enacted through them. They are told to be glad instead that their names are written in heaven. A picture came to me here of a conversation with a Minister retiring at around 70 – saying, in deep despair, that he felt he had not made a difference. Of course he had – but maybe he had not seen Satan fall or 500 people come forward at the close of his sermon – but in Christ's name he did make a difference. The incident came back with the thought that however much we have done and seen, however successful we have been in His name, however lately we have come, no matter the lack of success or success whatever that might be – what matters is that our name is written in Heaven.

References

Caird G B, *Saint Luke*, 1963, Pelican London.

Carson DA, France RT, Motyer JA, Wenham GJ, Editors, *New Bible Commentary*, 1994, Leicester. Inter-Varsity Press,

Davidson, Robert, *Wisdom and Worship*, the Edward Cadbury Lectures 1989, 1990 SCM, London

Guthrie, Donald, *Galatians*, 1974 Oliphants, London

Von Rad Gerhard, *The Message of the Prophets*, 1973 SCM London

Wikipedia Robert de Brus



Themes

Free Grace – by grace alone – justification/salvation through faith seems a very obvious theme into which to weave the healing, the gifts of a new creation, our responses and the proclamation of the Kingdom

There is another theme of a critique of the feminine through the slave girl and the mother of Isaiah. Do we assume the 70/72 were all male and if so why?



Prayers

Collect for the Day

Almighty God,
your Son Jesus Christ has taught us
that what we do
for the least of your children
we do also for him.
Give us the will to serve others
as he was the servant of all,
who gave up his life and died for us,
but lives and reigns
with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Sentence

With unflagging zeal, aglow with the
Spirit, serve the Lord.

Romans 12: 11

An introduction to worship;-

On the road for Jesus
Here we stop to pray
On the way for Jesus
Here we stop this day
On the Road for Jesus



Others join the Way.

Or

Make a joyful noise to God all the earth

Sing the glory of his name

All the earth worships You

Sing praises to your name.

Come and see what God has done

He turned the sea into dry land

Bless our God O peoples

Let the sound of his praise be heard

(Psalm 66)

Of Approach and Confession

Lord God we turn to you now

To this special space we come

and open our hearts and minds

Rejoicing in all that you are to us

Expectant in all that you will give to us

Receptive to the wisdom we will receive.

May the challenge of the prophets

The power of the Cross

The nurture of the spirit

meet us now and transform our lives

through Jesus Christ our Lord.



Guide us to leave at your door our outward confidences and own our weakness before you.

Enable us not to doubt how you value our presence here and now uniquely you have called us by name.

Open us to accept our fault and faithlessness and be prepared to be made clean again.

Invite us to enter this community of believers and share in our unity putting off the individuality that estranges us from our Master's body, the church.

... and so may we praise you, body mind and soul

Not as a duty to be done but as a joy and a delight to sing the wonders of your might, the love you hold out to us and the energising power of the Holy Spirit.

..... appropriate praise

Confession

We confess our sin and weakness before you today.

The faults of pride and arrogance that keep us from the acceptance of the free grace you offer each believer who leaves off self and enters faith wholeheartedly powerless before you.

The faults of sloth and a lack of focus in the service of the Kingdom that has us uninspired and lacking in effectiveness in our witness to the God in our midst and his search for more to love and know him.

All the little things that tarnish the shine of Jesus in our midst and keep us from love of neighbour – these and all the other faults you see in us we own and confess – hear these our sins and hear us as we voice the names of those to whom we need to be reconciled to be truly on the path of Christ our Lord in whose name we offer this the confession of our heart.

Silence

The almighty and merciful Lord

grant you pardon



and remission of all your sins,
time for amendment of life,
and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Silence

Supplication

God of love,
your Son gave us a new commandment,
that we should love one another,
even as you love us,
the unworthy and the wandering.
Give us a mind forgetful of past ill-will
and a heart to love one another;
through the same Jesus Christ,
your Son, our Saviour. **Amen.**

Thanksgiving

God of Power and Might
Christ of the Way and the Cross
Spirit of Truth and Light
We offer our thanksgiving
For the healing power of faith
And for the wholeness of being
Christ has brought to us.



We offer our thanksgiving
For the promise of the kingdom
The presence of the kingdom
The signs of the kingdom in our lives
We offer our thanksgiving
for the witness of the apostles
the saints
and the neighbour beside us
to your love and calling to faith.
We offer our thanksgiving
For the signs of hope in darkness
For the promise and the presence of abundant life
And the nurture of mother Church.
From dawn of time to end of time
From the dawn of our birth to the ending of our days
You are the eternal three and one
You are our god father son and Holy Spirit
Glorified forever.
Amen

Intercessions

Loving God,
you care for all your children;
you know each one and hear each prayer,



you know each house and see each need.

Give peace and wholeness to those in need this day

And bring into your kingdom all who long for a better life

Bring meaning to those who walk this world searching for your light.

Bless your Church, here and everywhere.

Energise her witness and remind us of

That great sending out

Into the highways and byways of a world starved of good news stories

in need of our story of a redeemer waiting with open arms to receive the lost.

Inspire all with love for your house,

zeal in your service,

and joy in the well-being of your kingdom.

Bless your servant, Elizabeth our Queen.

Govern the hearts and minds

of the Queen's ministers and counsellors,

that they may fulfil their service

for the welfare of the people

and the glory of your name.

Where there is discord we pray for harmony



Where there is warfare we pray for the safety of military and civilians

Where there is breakdown in relations we pray for reconciliation

In the name of the Prince of Peace

Bless with your comfort

all who are in trouble or pain.

Heal those who are sick;

support those who are dying;

console those who mourn;

supply the wants of those who are in need.

And be near to those

whom now we name in silence . . .

Bless our homes,

that love and joy may dwell there;

and keep those who are absent from us

within the protection of your love.

Commemoration of the Faithful Departed

Eternal God,

sinners find mercy in you and saints find joy.

You hold all souls in life;

the dead as well as the living are in your care.

We thank you for your people

of every age and place,

and for those dear to our own hearts,



who kept the faith on earth
and have entered into the joy
of your heavenly presence.
Inspire us by their example,
encourage us by their fellowship,
and bring us with them at the last
to glory everlasting.
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.



Children's Address

www.sermon4kids.com sets up a parody of a being sent on a trip. What do we take if we are being sent away on business for a week or two? Contrast that with what the 72 took or didn't – nor did they book ahead – if you have that kind of savvy congregation you might do a Trip Adviser spoof. The point being it all depends on Jesus – not our iPad.

Sermon4kids also uses a Harvest time thought which we could adapt for these last two years of awful weather.

On doing the rounds of the farms I met x – for conversation I asked him if he had planted oil seed rape this year – no the answer – keep this up as long as you want with a no to everything. Well then what did you plant? – nothing, I am playing it safe this year says the farmer.

Well that will make for a quieter harvest this year said the minister.

Contrast that with Jesus thoughts about the harvest of people and our willingness to talk about our faith to outsiders and willingness to encourage them in.

Harvesters' are wanted who will not try to play it safe.



Hymns

- CH4 490** Jesus Lover of my Soul
- CH4 553** Just As I am without one plea
- CH4 717** O Christ the healer we have come
- CH4 557** O love that wilt not let me go
- CH4 201** Worship the Lord in the Beauty of holiness
- CH4 63** All People that on earth do dwell
- CH4 482** Come let us to the Lord our God
- CH4 231** For the fruits of all creation
- CH4 693** Help us forgive forging Lord
- CH4 645** I'm not ashamed to own my Lord
- CH4 397** In the cross of Christ I glory
- CH4 694** Brother Sister let me serve you
- CH4 130** Ye servants of God
- CH4 251** I the Lord of sea and sky
- CH4 739** The churches one foundation
- CH4 692** Jesus puts this song into our hearts
- CH4 217** God of day
- CH4 593** She sits like a bird
- CH4 597** Loving Spirit
- CH4 547** What a friend
- CH4 595** O breath of life
- CH4 681** Send out the gospel
- CH4 360** Jesus Christ is Waiting



CH4 686 How happy are all they who hear



Additional Resources

Resourcing Mission



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 [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

Mission and Discipleship Council would like to thank Rev Robin McHaffie, Minister, Linton, Morebattle, Howman and Yetholm Parish Church for giving his thoughts on this week's lectionary.

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.

