



The Church of Scotland

Dalavich and Muckairn Sunday May 22nd 2022



Good morning, and Welcome to worship today.

We welcome those of you who here in the Parish Kirk, and we think of those who will read this service in their homes.

So, we are glad that you can join us today.

Intimations

So now let us be still in this space as we prepare to worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: God of the open road, God of the twisting path,
God of the narrow and upward way,

your people are gathered for worship!
In our time together, give us provision for the journey,
courage and faith and compassion,
and endurance to face any hardship.
Open our eyes to see you walking beside us,
protecting us, encouraging us, loving us.

God's people have gathered;
let us worship him together.

Opening hymn CH4 130

Ye servants of God, your master proclaim
and publish abroad His wonderful name;
the name all victorious of Jesus extol;
His kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.

Prayer of Adoration, Confession and Forgiveness, and Lord's Prayer

Almighty God the world reverberates with Your praise,
resonating with Your love, and with the wonder of Your resurrection.
Death could not hold You and in Your life, is our life,
Decay is not the final word, for You are the everlasting word
the eternal source of all goodness and all kindness All mercy and all love.
Thank You that You sing over us this morning,
quietening us with Your love, enlivening us with Your grace,
encouraging us with Your tender care.
Remind us again to be grateful for all that You are, and all that You have done, and
for all that You are doing through us and through others to bring Your kingdom closer.

Yet You know that sometimes we drown out Your song. We sing a different tune, of discord
and division. We don't want to hear of Your harmony or Your help.
And we turn down Your accompaniment in our lives.

Forgive us God, for the ways in which we hurt and harm those around us. The ways in which
we hurt and harm ourselves, in word and deed. And damage the life of Your world.
Forgive us too for the ways in which we have failed to say and to do Those things that would
have brought life to ourselves and to others. Cleanse us and restore us,

Lord have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord have mercy.

We know you are a God of grace, so help us to accept the words of Jesus, "your sins are
forgiven"

Grant us your Holy Spirit to enable us to follow you, Lord Jesus,
Help us O Father, to open ourselves to receive your Spirit,

That we might be Your community of the resurrection.
Abundant in Your grace and power
And ready to tell of the resurrection, the good news for all.

We ask our prayers in the knowledge of a loving God, inspiring Son, and powerful Spirit,
and we join with all the hosts of heaven as we magnify your glorious name, as we say
together our Lord's Prayer.

Our Father who is in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your Kingdom come, your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors
And lead us not into temptation
But deliver us from evil
For yours is the kingdom, and the power and the glory
For ever and ever Amen.

Introduction incl Psalm 67

Here we are, the sixth Sunday of Easter, the resurrection celebrations might seem a long time ago, but there's another couple of weeks yet before Pentecost.

In the period between Easter and Pentecost the lectionary lessons, the lessons appointed to be read in our churches each week, are a lesson from the Acts of the Apostles and a Gospel lesson. I consider this to be important as I don't think we study Acts enough, or gain enough encouragement from the book.

The Acts of Apostles, the book, is just what it says on the tin, the Acts of the Apostles, it starts with further appearances of Jesus, the conversion of Saul, when he sees Jesus on the road to Damascus, and then lots of accounts of the actions and travels of the early Apostles. We must remember that the appearances of the risen Lord, continue through Acts, the Epistles and then continue for the last 2000 year and even today.

We will think this morning of our desire to spread the gospel message, so here is a very short Psalm, 67, which reminds of the scope of Gods kingdom.

May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine on us
so that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.
May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
May the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you rule the peoples with equity
and guide the nations of the earth.

May the peoples praise you, God;
 may all the peoples praise you.
The land yields its harvest;
 God, our God, blesses us.
May God bless us still,
 so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

And now we sing again, praise to the God of all creation.

Hymn CH4 124

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation;
Praise God, my soul, for in him are your health and salvation;
Come all who hear,
into his presence draw near,
joining in glad adoration.

Paul is doing his best to spread the gospel in the known world at that time, and then the gospel lesson is about Jesus healing on the Sabbath, and asking the silly question, do you want to be healed ?

Lesson Acts 16 5-15 Paul goes to Philippi and meets Lydia

Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia.

When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. “If you consider me a believer in the Lord,” she said, “come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us.

Lesson John 5 1-9 Jesus heals on the Sabbath

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—

the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"

"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath,

Hymn CH4 718

We cannot measure how You heal
or answer every sufferer's prayer,
yet we believe your grace responds
where faith and doubt unite to care.
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,
survive to hold and heal and warn,
to carry all through death to life
and cradle children yet unborn.

Sermon

Let us listen for the word of God.

A text from Luke's gospel, chapter 9.

"Jesus called the twelve together and gave them the power and authority over demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God".

Now I don't know how good you are at geography, and about Europe in particular, but I didn't study the subject at school beyond what we had to do. I expect that many of us know a bit more about Europe after Brexit, and now with Russia's push Westwards. So google tells me that the continent of Europe is bounded to the East by the Ural and Caucasus mountains, but the political eastern boundary of Europe is not so clearly defined. Which countries are in or out of the EU can become confusing, especially when the Eurovision Song Contest includes Australia.

Why I am talking about this, because today's lesson from the Acts of the Apostles is considered by many to be the recognition of the first conversion of a Christian on European soil, one Lydia, the seller of purple cloth.

If I could remember my Sunday school days, then I suppose I did get some geography lessons there when we did the first, second, third missionary journeys of St Paul, with the little dotted line across the map. Maybe some of our older bibles still have the maps in them.

Paul is on his travels, but he has a bit of a hang up. He is very content in Asia, he is quite happy to preach to Gentiles, but in Asia. But now we read that the Holy Spirit is stopping him

from speaking the word in Asia. Do we find this curious? did he find it annoying? Was he feeling that he was being silenced?

Paul sets off Mysia, to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit doesn't let him do that. Then he has a vision. There is a man of Macedonia pleading with him to go there. So off they go, there happen to be ships available in the right place, and they come to Philippi, a leading city in Macedonia and a Roman colony.

Now we do the coincidence bit, or as I like to call it God-incidence.

There is a woman called Lydia, from the city of Thyatira a town famous for its special purple cloth, but a long way from Philippi. She was a Gentile, but obviously a convert to Judaism. So Lydia decides to go on a mega journey and she sets off on a commercial sales drive. She takes lots of servants and sales assistants with her and lots of great rolls of cloth. She too has to make a sea voyage, and she heads off for Philippi. Why Philippi? She could have gone to Neapolis, or Athens or even Corinth.

So the stage is set. Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher, says in his commentary, "I wot it never entered into Lydia's heart, when she left Thyatira with her purple bales that she was going to find Jesus Christ in Philippi, and neither did Paul guess when he saw in a vision a man from Macedonia, that the first person he would help would be not a man of Macedonia, but a woman of Thyatira, and that his first congregation in those parts would be a handful of women, gathered at a makeshift synagogue by the side of the river."

Spurgeon goes on to say, "Neither Paul nor Lydia knew what God was about to do, but God knew. He understands the end from the beginning, and he times his acts of providence to meet our deepest needs in the wisest way".

And then, well, as they say, who knows what will happen next, except of course God knows.

The ladies welcome Paul and his friends, they listen and worship together, you might say for Paul, mission impossible? But not with God, and Lydia invites Paul back to her place, to share the good news with her household.

This is a story about hospitality and mission, this is an example of how we can support each other in helping others to come to know of the example of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now it could well be that for some of us we have found ourselves in one of these amazing coincidence, God-incidence situations. We didn't know what was going to happen, nor did the person we met, but it did, and afterwards we say, I wonder... why do we wonder? Don't we believe in God's plan? Do we assume that we are on God's plan, and then suddenly we are diverted? Apparently David Livingstone was convinced that his vocation lay in China, but he was prevented from going there by the Opium War and so he went to Africa.

So in today's story we can see that not only does God open the way for opportunities of service in His name, he can also close down other options, perhaps protecting us, and leading us to better plans.

There is a verse from a hymn you may or may not know, it starts, "Thou God of truth and Grace", and the line goes on "why hast thou cast our lot in this same age and place and why together brought to see each other's face", that's the one you quote when you're in a meeting

and someone's being difficult, that's the one you quote when you meet someone you've been trying to avoid, but the end of the verse is "to join in loving sympathy and mix our friendly souls in thee"

That is in effect mission. We aren't the traditional missionaries in pith helmets, we are ordinary folk who come into contact with other ordinary folk, and therefore have opportunity for mission.

Our God is a sending God, sending the prophets, sending His own son Jesus to seek and save the lost, sending his followers to work for the establishment of the new kingdom of God, sending His Holy Spirit to enable all the sendings to bear fruit.

Jesus calls us, his followers, to be sent out. Our mission is not to be here in church Sunday by Sunday, not to be maintenance people for ancient monuments, our mission is to go out as apprentices, as agents, as apostles, because it is the people who we meet who are not within the church who are the ones to whom we are to spread the message.

Why has thou cast our lot in this same age and place? to join in loving sympathy, and mix our friendly souls in thee!! Who knows where God might lead us tomorrow or during the week, just be prepared, and know that you have the support of your fellow Christians, that you have the power of the Holy Spirit, the example of Jesus Christ and the love of God.

In the words of another hymn, perhaps known to some, "Go forth and tell, O church of God awake, God's saving news to all the nations take, Proclaim Christ Jesus, Saviour lord and King, that al the world his worthy praise may sing"

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

AMEN

Offering and Dedication

Hymn (seated) CH4 755

Be still and know, that I am God,

Be still and know, that I am God,

Be still and know, that I am God.

Prayer for world peace

Explain versicle and response

Leader: God, we pray for peace. **All: Hear our prayer**

Leader: We pray together for peace in our world.

We pray for all the people of Ukraine, those still in Ukraine and those who have moved to other countries

All: God, we pray for peace. **Hear our prayer**

Leader: We pray for the all people of Russia, that they might see that war is senseless, and death is needless

All: **God, we pray for peace. Hear our prayer**

Leader: We pray for girls, and boys, women and men living in fear of what tomorrow may bring.

All: **God, we pray for peace. Hear our prayer**

Leader: We pray for the leaders of all nations of the world as they wrestle with their principles, and with the needs of humanity.

All: **God, we pray for peace. Hear our prayer**

Leader: May the peace of God reign in our world, may the love of God, the peace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit be known to all.

All: AMEN

Prayer of Thanksgiving, Intercession

INTERCESSIONS prayers for others and ourselves

Loving God

You know full well the worries and fears we bring with us today.

Those thoughts and concerns that burden us and weigh us down.

In the stillness we offer them to You now,

believing that You not only hear, but attend to all of them.

Gracious God,

You know that our belief wavers, our faith is fickle and our loyalty fleeting.

You promise not to snuff out the smouldering wick –

take our lives as they are and fan into flame all that they might be, for the sake of Your kingdom.

Merciful God,

our world is full of strife and conflict, claims and counter claims, demands and lies and aggression.

We pray for peace even when peace seems such a distant hope.

We pray for all those working to bring healing and life in places where there is little of either.

We pray too for Your church, here in Scotland, and around the world.

Heal hurts and disappointments, bring unity where there is discord and refresh those who are weary. Take from us our fear and let Your church be built up in courage and love.

Wonderful God, we pray for those we know who we see are in need of prayer.

Some will be expecting us to pray for them at this time, others will not.

We pray for those who are still experiencing the effects of Covid.

For the people of North Korea now experiencing Covid, with no one being vaccinated.

We pray for all those who need Your peace and comfort,

Those who need Your courage and hope,

Those who don't yet know the relentless tenderness of Your love.

Work through us and in spite of us to make Your love known.

And we pray for the whole church, for those who have gone before us,

and for those who will come after us.

We pray that we will all be united in your Kingdom,

We offer all our prayers in and through the sure name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Closing Hymn CH4 739

The Church's one foundation,

is Jesus Christ her Lord;

she is His new creation,

by water and the word;

From heaven He came and sought her,

to be His holy bride;

with His own blood He bought her,

and for her life He died.

Our words of sending

Go with joy wherever God may send you
Be strong in your faith, bold in your decisions
And thankful in your acknowledgement that
Jesus is your guide, your companion and your Saviour.
We gather for worship and we scatter for mission

Benediction

**The blessing of God almighty, The Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit, be amongst us
and remain with us evermore. Amen.**