



ST JAMES AYR – SUNDAY REFLECTIONS

#### INTRODUCTION



A warm welcome to this week's Sunday Reflection as we think what it means to be Jesus' disciples

.

#### **INTIMATIONS**

**23 Feb Thinking Day**

**2 March Communion**

**9 March AGM**

#### **Call to worship**

The apostle Paul says:

“Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God (Galatians 5,1-2)

#### **Hymn**

## **CHILDREN'S TALK**

**Hymn:**

**Prayer and Lord's Prayer**

Let us pray

Gracious God

We come together in this place as your disciples, as your people. The love for your son Jesus Christ, for his teachings and his life unites us in faith, our trust in our salvation through your son's death and resurrection unites us in hope.

Loving God,

You have chosen us to be your people, the people you will carry on eagles' wings, the people you will lead through the darkest valley to a land of milk and honey, the people you care for like a shepherd cares for his sheep. For this we give you thanks.

You have sent your son Jesus Christ to us, to live among us, to share our joys and our pain, you have sent him to teach us and to challenge us and to help us find our way to you in the knowledge that through him we are saved. For this we praise and thank you.

You have given us your Holy Spirit, through which we know you and your son, which encourages us and challenges us to follow Jesus Christ, to make him the centre of our lives here on earth. For this we give you praise and thanks.

Forgiving God,

We confess to you that we can find it hard to follow your son, to listen to his teachings rather than the teachings of this world. We can be self-centred and absorbed in our own troubles and worries. Help us to seek and to find your son in our lives, we pray.

We confess to you that we do not always seek unity and harmony within our church. We have strong emotions when we think of our future and we feel hurt at times. Help us to find a way to each other in love and grace, we pray.

Gracious Lord

We know that we have sinned against you and against each other, but we also know that you have forgiven us through your son Jesus Christ and in this trust we now pray as your son has taught us to pray.

Our father, who art in heaven,

Hallowed be Thy name, thy kingdom come

Thy 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 Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. AMEN

**Hymn:**

## **READINGS**

### **Isaiah 6, 1-8**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord. He was sitting on his throne, high and exalted, and his robe filled the whole Temple.<sup>2</sup> Around him flaming creatures were standing, each of which had six wings. Each creature covered its face with two wings, and its body with two, and used the other two for flying.<sup>3</sup> They were calling out to each other:

“Holy, holy, holy!

The Lord Almighty is holy!

His glory fills the world.”

<sup>4</sup>The sound of their voices made the foundation of the Temple shake, and the Temple itself became filled with smoke.<sup>5</sup> I said, “There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty.”<sup>6</sup> Then one of the creatures flew down to me, carrying a burning coal that he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs.<sup>7</sup> He touched my lips with the burning coal and said, “This has touched your lips, and now your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven.”<sup>8</sup> Then I heard the Lord say, “Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?” I answered, “I will go! Send me!”

### **Luke 5, 1-11**

One day Jesus was standing on the shore of Lake Gennesaret while the people pushed their way up to him to listen to the word of God.<sup>2</sup> He saw two boats pulled up on the beach; the fishermen had left them and were washing the nets.<sup>3</sup> Jesus got into one of the boats—it belonged to Simon—and asked him to push off a little from the shore. Jesus sat in the boat and taught the crowd.<sup>4</sup> When he finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Push the boat out further to the deep water, and you and your partners let down your nets for a catch.”<sup>5</sup> “Master,” Simon answered, “we worked hard all night long and caught nothing. But if you say so, I will let down the nets.”<sup>6</sup> They let them down and caught such a large number of fish that the nets were about to break.<sup>7</sup> So they motioned to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. They came and filled both boats so full of fish that the boats were about to sink.<sup>8</sup> When Simon Peter saw what had happened, he fell on his knees before Jesus and said, “Go away from me, Lord! I am a sinful man!”<sup>9</sup> He and the others with him were all amazed at the large number of fish they had caught.<sup>10</sup> The same was true of Simon's partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. Jesus said to Simon, “Don't be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.”<sup>11</sup> They pulled the boats up on the beach, left everything, and followed Jesus.

## REFLECTION

Let us pray for the Holy Spirit

Loving God,

Tou have called us to be your disciples, you have chosen us as your people, you have promised to be faithful to us. For all this we give you praise and thanks. And in offering our thanks we ask you now for your Holy Spirit to be with us as we hear your word, so we can make it meaningful for us and live a life as you would want us to live.

For this we pray in Jesus' name. AMEN

Friends,

You will have heard about president Donald' Trumps inauguration service, where the bishop of Washington, Mariann Budde has gained a sort of controversial celebrity status, when she gave the sermon at the interfaith prayer service. In this sermon she addressed the new president directly and said: "Millions have put their trust in you. And as you told the nation yesterday, you have felt the providential hand of a loving God. In the name of our God, I ask you to have [mercy](#) on the people in our country who are scared now." Among the people who are scared now, she listed immigrants, refugees and those who feel pushed to the margins because of their gender or race. Whatever else this sermon has achieved, it has certainly gripped the attention of her people and incited discussions, in a way that a sermon rarely does, even here in the UK, even beyond the English speaking world, and that – if nothing else - can only be a good thing.

The reaction to her sermon was as divided, as the North American continent – or dare I say the world - is these days: for some she was a hero, fearlessly speaking truth to power and confronting the arguably most powerful man in the world, for others she was an unpatriotic left-wing hardliner, who is not very good at her job and should be added to the deportation list, even though she is a born and bred US citizen. She received praise from the Wahington Post,

the New York Times and even the Vatican and criticism from the White House, including Vice President Vance and of course Donald Trump himself.

So what is she now? Hero or villain, brave or plain wrong? She is neither. She was doing her job. She was preaching the gospel. Pleading for mercy is not political, it is Christian, speaking out for the marginalised and welcoming the stranger is not political, it is Biblical. To be praised for it may be a pleasant side effect now and then, to be scorned and criticised, even threatened for it is the cost of following Jesus in this day and age.

And following Jesus, that is the challenge, our New Testament reading poses today. It is a calm story, nothing much seems to be happening. Jesus wants to preach to the crowds and to be better seen and heard he climbs into a boat and asks the fishermen to push him a little off the shore. When he has finished, he asks the fishermen to cast out their nets once again, and the catch is beyond anything they have seen. As far as miracles go, it is not the most spectacular Jesus has ever done, so much so that some who read the story even tried to find a natural explanation for it, which I have to admit, I usually do not find all that helpful. It is certainly less impressive than healing a paralysed man, driving out legions of demons or even waking a child from the dead. All the same, Simon Peter senses a power and authority in Jesus, that he had not encountered before and he reacts with an exclamation: "Go away from me, Lord! I am a sinful man!" As unspectacular and quiet the story begins and unfolds, as dramatic and life changing is its ending. Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."<sup>11</sup> They pulled the boats up on the beach, left everything, and followed Jesus". At first sight that too, sounds calm, understated. But just imagine the effect it will have on Simon Peter and his fellow fishermen for the rest of their lives, imagine what is at stake for them. From one minute to the other they leave their

families, their livelihoods, everything that is familiar to them, to follow Jesus on a journey they have no way of knowing where it may lead them. From this day to the next they cease to be fishermen and become fishers of men, missionaries, if you like. From this day forward it will be their job to give testimony for Jesus as the Messiah, for God and his kingdom. The road that lies ahead of them will not be an easy one, as we, who are familiar with the gospel, well know. It will be full of suffering, betrayal and hardship. It will end in tears and in Jesus' death. Whether his first disciples knew what was waiting for them or at least had an inkling of it – who knows. At this moment in time, however, I am willing to bet, they did not think of the consequences of their decision. They just did, what they felt to be right – and as we know, despite all challenges, they never looked back.

Our own calling, I am sure, will be quieter, less dramatic, much like the bulk of the story that lies before us. Most of us will not want to up sticks, leave their old life behind, and start something completely new for Jesus' sake, and nor is everyone required to do so. Most of us, I dare say, will have neither the opportunity nor the obligation to speak publicly in front of the president of the United States and I for one am grateful for it. Yet, to answer Jesus' call "come, follow me", to give testimony to Jesus' life, death and resurrection, to speak of his teachings and to live them, to love our neighbour, to welcome the stranger, to care deeply for the poor and the marginalised, that is what makes us Christians, that is what makes us a church. A church, a congregation, is more than a meeting place for nice people, is more than a social gathering, a church is the community of Jesus' followers, of his disciples. It is the community of the people, who answered a call.

And both we and the fishermen who followed Jesus have a role model from ancient times. It comes to the prophet Isaiah in a vision and he describes it eloquently and passionately: Then one of

the creatures flew down to me, carrying a burning coal that he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. <sup>7</sup>He touched my lips with the burning coal and said, "This has touched your lips, and now your guilt is gone, and your sins are forgiven." <sup>8</sup>Then I heard the Lord say, "Whom shall I send? Who will be our messenger?" I answered, "I will go! Send me!" But his experience is fundamentally different to that of the fishermen. There is nothing of the unquestioning confident decision to leave everything behind. Instead, the prophet is initially full of self-doubt: "There is no hope for me! I am doomed because every word that passes my lips is sinful, and I live among a people whose every word is sinful. And yet, with my own eyes I have seen the King, the Lord Almighty". He feels unworthy, he knows about his shortcomings, he needs the reassurance from God and his angels that his sins are forgiven. Maybe we can relate to that, maybe we, too feel inadequate sometimes, know about our imperfection, maybe we, too sometimes lack the confidence and the conviction, that we can and should be God's messengers, through what we say and what we do. But here is the catch: It is not us who choose to be God's messenger or God's disciple. God chooses us. And it follows from there, that we are worthy, that we are capable and that we are called. All we need to do is to answer the call, all we need to say is: "Here I am, Lord. Send me". AMEN

**Hymn:**

## **INTERCESSION**

Loving God,

You encourage us to follow your son Jesus Christ, because you want a world where all are brothers and sisters and people live well together, because you want a world without hatred and cruelty. For this we thank you and in giving thanks we remember in our prayer all those who experience a world you do not want.



We will always remember to pray for those who live in countries and regions of war and unrest, in Ukraine, in Israel and Gaza, in Sudan and wherever there is bloodshed in the world. We pray for the people suffering and for their leaders, that they may find a way towards peace and an end to violence and destruction. Let them know that you are a God of peace.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer

We pray for all who live on the margins of society the world over. We pray for those who are pushed to the edges of their community because of their gender, their race, their beliefs or because of a mental or physical disability. Let them know that you are the God of the oppressed, that you are on their side, we pray.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer

We pray for all who feel abandoned and left behind in this country and in this town. We pray for the poor who have lost hope of meaningful employment, for the ill, who want to contribute to society and cannot, for the traumatised who are caught up in destructive thoughts. Let them know that you are the God of the weak and vulnerable.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

We will always remember in our prayer everyone in our congregation and in our community who are suffering. We pray for those who linger in hospitals, for those who go through the anguish of mental illness, for those who miss a person they were once close to. Let them know that you are the God of the cross and that you know their pain.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

For all this we pray in Jesus' name. AMEN

## **We prepare for the dedication of the offering**

### **Dedication**

Loving God,

You have given us a purpose and a challenge in asking us to follow your son Jesus Christ, you have chosen us as his disciples. That is a privilege we are grateful for. And with gratitude we bring to you some of our worldly possessions, and ask that you may bless these offerings, so they are used to bring Jesus' love to this world through us all.

For this we pray in Jesus' name. AMEN

### **Hymn:**

### **Benediction**

And the God in whom we trust guard you and guide you in this coming week. And the almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forevermore. AMEN

