



ST JAMES AYR – SUNDAY REFLECTIONS



INTRODUCTION

A warm welcome to our Sunday Reflection as we think about following Jesus

.

INTIMATION:

TBC “Money Talk”

14 May Newton Park Ct

8 June Pentecostal lunch

Call to worship

The apostle Paul says

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5,8)

HYMN:

Prayer and Lord's Prayer

Let us pray

Gracious God

Your son showed himself to his disciples after he had risen from the dead, he gave them hope that their story would go on, he changed their life as they followed the risen Christ. As we come together this morning we pledge to follow you and let you into our lives.

Loving God,

We thank you that you have walked with your people through all facets of their lives, through light and dark, happiness and sorrow, laughter and tears. You are with us from our birth to our death and through our baptism we are yours.

We thank you for your son Jesus Christ who defeated death itself through his resurrection on Easter day, who showed himself to Mary Magdalene and to his disciples as the risen Christ, so that they may believe, who made himself known to us as our saviour and in following him we are his.

We thank you for your Holy Spirit, which brought your church into being, through which we are part of your church, through which we know and love you as your son's followers, through which our hearts and minds are yours.

Forgiving Father,

Sometimes we find it hard to follow your son, to stay focussed on him among the distractions and temptations of this world. We give in to worldly values like wealth or power or prestige. Forgive us where we forget our pledge to be Christ's disciples.

Sometimes it is too difficult for us to live a godly and Christ-like life, we find it difficult to love our neighbour as your son taught us and as

he loved us. When we are hurt, we hurt back, when we are slighted, we slight, too. Forgive us where we cannot forgive each other.

Gracious Lord

We know that we have sinned against you and against each other, but we also know that you have forgiven our sins through your son, who died as a ransom for many and in this assurance we pray as he himself 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

Psalm 30, 1-6

I praise you, Lord, because you have saved me and kept my enemies from gloating over me.
² I cried to you for help, O Lord my God, and you healed me; you kept me from the grave.
I was on my way to the depths below, but you restored my life ⁴ Sing praise to the Lord, all his faithful people. Remember what the Holy One has done, and give him thanks! ⁵ His anger lasts only a moment, his goodness for a lifetime. Tears may flow in the night, but joy comes in the morning.

John 21,1-19

After this, Jesus appeared once more to his disciples at Lake Tiberias. This is how it happened. ² Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael (the one from Cana in Galilee), the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples of Jesus were all together. ³ Simon Peter said to the others, "I am going fishing." "We will come with you," they told him. So they went out in a boat, but all that night they did not catch a thing. ⁴ As the sun was rising, Jesus stood at the water's edge, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Then he asked them, "Young men, haven't you caught anything?" "Not a thing," they answered. ⁶ He said to them, "Throw your net out on the right side of the boat, and you will catch some." So they threw the net out and could not pull it back in, because they had caught so many fish. ⁷ The disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Peter heard that it was the Lord, he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken his clothes off) and jumped into the water. ⁸ The other disciples came to shore in the boat, pulling the net full of fish. They were not very far from land, about a hundred yards away. ⁹ When they stepped ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there with fish on it and some bread. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." ¹¹ Simon Peter went aboard and dragged the net ashore full of big fish, a hundred and fifty-three in all; even though there were so many, still the net did not tear. ¹² Jesus said to them, "Come and eat." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ So Jesus went over, took the bread, and gave it to them; he did the same with the fish. ¹⁴ This, then, was the third time Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from death. ¹⁵ After they had eaten, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?" "Yes, Lord," he answered, "you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Take care of my lambs." ¹⁶ A second time Jesus said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" "Yes, Lord," he answered, "you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Take care of my sheep." ¹⁷ A third time Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter became sad because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" and so he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you!" Jesus said to him, "Take care of my sheep. ¹⁸ I am telling you the truth: when you were young, you used to get ready and go anywhere you wanted to; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will tie you up and take you where you don't want to go." ¹⁹ (In saying this, Jesus was indicating the way in which Peter would die and bring glory to God.) Then Jesus said to him, "Follow me!"

REFLECTION

Let us pray for the Holy Spirit

Loving God,

You have done great things to us and to all your people, things we often take for granted or do not think about. You have made this world in all its beauty, you have comforted your people when they needed you, you have sent your son for our salvation. For all this we give you praise and thanks. And in offering our thanks to you we now ask for your Holy Spirit, so we see and understand what you have done for us, not only today, but each and every day of our lives.

For this we pray in Jesus' name. AMEN

As I am writing this sermon it is once again business as usual. Yesterday we showed our guests from Germany Dundonald Castle and the Smugglers Trail, we enjoyed a long walk through Dundonald woods with bluebells and wild garlic in full bloom, the day before we went along South Beach, which I have to admit I do rarely on my own or even with local friends, as I fancy I have not got the time, or it simply does not occur to us, we waited for the sunset over Arran and especially then I thought I am not taking enough advantage of living in this beautiful area. After all I come from a nearly landlocked country and I always wanted to live by the seaside. Last night we were sitting in the living room of the manse chatting until well after midnight, catching up and reminiscing. Today our friends have headed off to Loch Lomond. Today it is business as usual for me and my family. My husband has gone to work, my daughter is studying, and I am sitting at my desk typing, I will go to the hospital in the afternoon and have a Kirk Session in the evening. It will be a busy day; it will be a normal day and only the open garden gate is evidence that we had a few extraordinary moments.

I imagine it is quite similar for the disciples John's gospel is talking about. Jesus has died, Jesus has risen, Jesus has shown himself to them, convinced even the doubting Thomas – who is by the way among them in today's reading. But that was a while ago, now it is business as usual, now they go fishing. After all that is their job. It is almost as if nothing had happened. Simon Peter said to the others, "I am going fishing." "We will come with you," they told him. So they went out in a boat, but all that night they did not catch a thing", the gospel tells us. And the day – or rather the night – could not have been more ordinary. It must have been frustrating, too. They were up all night, working all night, and nothing to show for it. And this is when Jesus stands at the shore, waiting for them. Just as the sun is rising and the men come back from work, tired and exhausted, I should imagine, he is there. And then an extraordinary thing happens: Jesus persuades them to try once again, to throw out their nets and they catch so many fish, they cannot haul them in. It is quite remarkable that the disciples do as they are told, even though they do not recognise Jesus. Only when the wonder has happened when they caught over a hundred and fifty fish and the net still did not tear do they recognise Jesus, do they recognise their Lord. And maybe that is part of the miracle: the unquestioning trust they put into this man, whom they perceive as a stranger – at least at first.

And then Jesus does the most ordinary thing in the world: he cooks breakfast and invites his disciples, his friends to join him. Some bread, some fish, a charcoal fire – that is it. And yet, this part is reminiscent of the day when Jesus fed 5000 people just with a few fish and two loaves of bread. It is a miracle. It is extraordinary. And when Jesus says: come and eat, then the scene is also reminiscent of communion, an invitation to us all to take part in the extraordinary, the extraordinary that manifests itself in the most ordinary, every day elements, in bread and wine. Every day items that we can and do buy from the supermarket. And while we as reformed protestants do not believe in transubstantiation, in the real change of bread and wine into Christ's body and blood, communion is still a transformation, an invitation to take part in the extraordinary.

And this is what I take from today's reading, not just for the disciples, but for us all, who are Jesus' followers: that the miracle, the extraordinary happens on the most ordinary days, to the most ordinary people in the most ordinary circumstances. And so the extraordinary can and does happen to us, and sometimes it comes disguised as ordinary everyday occurrence. Going back to the beginning of the sermon: The sun sets over Arran every single night, and when I see it every time I go to the wee Tesco on Prestwick Road in the evening after work, I suppose I got used to it, to the point that I don't see it anymore. In our friends, who live nowhere near the coast, it inspired awe and wonder. And it could inspire awe and wonder in me, in us. It is after all a part of God's good creation, whom we confess to have put the sun, the moon and the sun into the sky. It could be a reminder of Christ's resurrection and of ours, of new life and new hope, that we know that when the night is over, the same sun will rise again. It is the most ordinary, everyday occurrence and yet it is the most extraordinary event in the world, when the sun sets and rises over Arran. In the same way bread and wine are the most ordinary, everyday item, and yet they become extraordinary elements, set apart from all common uses, each and every communion Sunday. Our faith does not often come with a bang, it comes slowly, softly, hardly noticeable in the most ordinary things. Jesus can be found in the most ordinary, everyday encounters, in a homeless person we see in the street, in the poor family at our children's and grandchildren's' school, in our neighbours and in the stranger. Because Jesus said: What you have done to one of the least of my brothers and sister, you have done to me. And so, the most ordinary gesture we make, the most ordinary thing we say, a sandwich for a person in need, a word of comfort for a bereaved neighbour, can mean extraordinary things to others.

But the story does not end there, our story does not begin or end with a miracle. It begins and ends with a question that Jesus asks: "Do you love me". Three times altogether Jesus asks Simon Peter that same question: "Do you love me". It is that important. Peter gets a bit sad, or in other Bible translations a bit annoyed. Why does

Jesus even has to ask? He has to ask, because this too is a transformation, a transition: When Jesus was alive and walking with his disciples here on earth, he was in charge, he did the caring and the healing, he was their Lord. That of course, he still is – all the same things are shifting: It is now Peter's turn to feed the lambs and tend the sheep. Jesus gives him the power and the authority but also the responsibility to do so. It is not something Peter has particularly asked for, it may not be something he really wanted to do, especially when you consider the end Jesus predicts, the end he will face for Jesus' sake. It is not a choice, it is a calling and it all hinges on the one question: "do you love me". Because only if Peter loves Jesus and loves him enough, he will be able to follow through what Jesus' charges him with: to tend to his sheep to the very end. To give his life for others as Jesus did.

2000 years on, the baton has passed again, from Peter to each of us, who feel called into the life of the church. It is up to us to talk about Jesus, to live in a credible Christ-like way, in short to live and to share the gospel in our part of the world. And for all of us too, it hinges on the same question, Jesus asking "Do you love me", what do we say?

AMEN.

Hymn:

INTERCESSION

Loving God

We come to you today with gratitude for your son's life, for his death and resurrection, we come with thanks for the hope and the faith he has instilled in us and the love he gave to us. And in bringing our thanks before you, we pray for all, who cannot hope, whose faith is tested beyond endurance.

We will always continue to pray for peace in countries where death and destruction, war and terror reign, in Ukraine, in Israel and Gaza, in Sudan and Yemen and elsewhere in the world. We pray for civilians caught up in a conflict that is not their own and for soldiers, who have no choice but to fight. May they find new hope in you.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer

As our world becomes less and less predictable and understandable we pray for politicians all over the world, in America, in China, in Russia and here in Europe, that you may touch their hearts and they govern the people entrusted to them with wisdom, grace and mercy. May they find guidance through your word.

Lord, in your mercy hear our prayer

We pray for all who are downtrodden and marginalised in this country and in this town, for all who struggle with poverty, with illness or addiction, for all who see hatred and violence as the only outlet of their frustration. May they find peace in their hearts and hope in you.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer

We will always remember to pray for everyone in our congregation and community, we pray for those who are in hospital or recovering at home, we pray for those who must adapt to a life in care home, and we pray for all who grieve someone they loved. May they all feel your love, we pray.

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 called us to follow you through your son Jesus Christ, you have given us purpose and meaning through your church, of which we are privileged to be a part, you have given us the community of the faithful. For all this we give you praise and thanks. And in gratitude we bring to you some of our worldly goods and we ask that you may add your blessing, so they are used for your glory.

For this we pray in Jesus' name. AMEN

Hymn:

Benediction

And the God who made us his disciples 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

