

5TH APRIL 2020

# FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



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Scottish minister Alexander Whyte was known for his uplifting prayers in the pulpit. He always found something for which to be grateful. One Sunday morning the weather was so gloomy that one church member thought to himself, "Certainly the preacher won't think of anything for which to thank the Lord on a wretched day like this." *Much to his surprise, however, Whyte began by praying, "We thank Thee, O God, that it is not always like this."*

Some might be tempted to think that during Covid-19 that we might struggle to be thankful, but we have seen an increasing thankfulness in our communities in these difficult days. This doesn't mean that we are not aware of the tremendous sadness and uncertainty that surrounds us, but it does mean that we are thankful to God for His blessings during challenging times. We're thankful for family, friends, neighbours, our amazing NHS, all the key workers, for the necessary food, water and medicines, home comforts, and for the many ways that we can communicate to one another in this technological age.

If I can paraphrase Rev Alexander Whyte's words for our day, then may we continue to be thankful for everything we have and also renew our hope in the Lord that we will yet see even better days because it is not always going to be like this!

# PSALM 121

I to the hills will lift mine eyes.  
From whence doth come mine aid?  
My safety cometh from the Lord,  
who heaven and earth hath made.

Thy foot he'll not let slide, nor will  
he slumber that thee keeps.  
Behold, he that keeps Israel,  
he slumbers not, nor sleeps.

The Lord thee keeps, the Lord thy shade  
on thy right hand doth stay:  
the moon by night thee shall not smite,  
nor yet the sun by day.

The Lord shall keep thy soul: he shall  
preserve thee from all ill.  
Henceforth thy going out and in  
God keep for ever will.

## READING ACTS 2: 1 - 11

1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken.

7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans?"

8 Then how

is it that each of us hears them in our native language?

9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome  
11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

## LORD'S PRAYER

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 this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors  
who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever. Amen.

## SERMON

Jesus had told His disciples that He would leave them, but He also told His disciples that He would not leave them as orphans so that they would have no sense of abandonment when Christ ascended to glory. Which means that Christ's absence from His disciples will be the very means by which He would be present with them.

In other words, Christ promises that He will leave them and yet at the same time He will come to them. So on the one hand Jesus must leave to go and prepare a place for the disciples in Heaven (John 14) and yet at the same time He is preparing a place in their hearts where He declares '**Lo, I am with you even unto the end of the age.**' (Matthew 28)

So, how will Christ be present with His disciples when He has ascended to heaven? Well, Christ will be present with His disciples in the Person and work of the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity! And it is for the disciples benefit that Jesus must go away from them and return to the Father; so that He can send the Great Comforter the Holy Spirit.

And to keep this as simple to understand as possible, Jesus is really saying to the disciples that the presence of the Holy Spirit in them is the presence of Christ! That's why on one hand Jesus can say that He is going away to prepare a place for them, but where He can also say I will not leave you as orphans. Jesus is clearly saying that He will come to His people in the person and work of the Holy Spirit!

And when the Lord said that He would come to them, He is not only saying that He will come and comfort them in their need; **but that He will come to them and stay with them and never leave them!!!** In other words, Jesus is telling His disciples that God is coming to take up residence in the believer's heart where we can know and have communion with Christ.

When Jesus ascended into heaven and when He was taken out of the sight of His beloved disciples, we remember their reaction?! *There was no hint of disappointed and they were not sad or uncertain about their future.* Not a bit of it. Instead, we read in Luke 24v52 ***Then they worshipped the Lord and returned to Jerusalem with GREAT JOY!***

There is Great Joy among the disciples because although Christ is out of their sight He remains in their hearts. They knew that Jesus must leave to go and prepare a place in Heaven for His people and yet at the same time they knew that He has prepared a place in their hearts where the Holy Spirit dwells within them forever.

Now it's interesting to notice one of the phenomena of the day of Pentecost; these Galilean men began to speak in tongues. Or these Galilean men began to speak in other languages so that everyone gathered in Jerusalem could hear the wonders of God in their own language.

***Acts 2v9-11 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans & Arabs - we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!***

We remember another place in the Bible where God sent tongues among the people, in Genesis chapter 11. God sent tongues to the people building the great tower of Babel. The people had forgotten about God, they wanted to make a name for themselves, they were powerful, they all spoke the same language and were controlled by the powerful few. To remedy this God sent tongues of languages among the people to bring confusion so that they couldn't understand one another and as a result different language groups dispersed all over the earth never to be congregated in only one place again.

But here at Pentecost, the Lord sent tongues among the people, but this time it's not for confusion and separation, but it's for blessing and for all to come to know and understand the Gospel call.

And when the disciples spoke in these other languages it was the sign to all the world that the blessing of God through Christ is no longer to be contained to Israel alone, but the blessing of the Gospel is to go to all the world so that everyone can hear the good news in their own language, to repent of their sin and be saved.

The Gospel is to be shared to all people of every language so all can come to know Christ as Lord & Saviour!

So, whoever you are and wherever you are the Lord wants you to know and hear that He has come to you and for you, He has also gone to prepare a place for you, He will never leave you, and He is our Great Comforter!

Have you heard the Gospel call coming from the pages of Scripture, have you responded to Christ's invitation to repent and be saved and to rest in the finished work of the cross? Then we like the disciples in Luke 24 can worship the Lord this day and be filled with GREAT JOY because Christ fulfils His promise to His people, ***'Lo, I am with you even unto the end of the age.'***

## HYMN COME, THOU FOUNT OF EVERY BLESSING

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing  
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing  
Call for songs of loudest praise  
Teach me some melodious sonnet  
Sung by flaming tongues above  
Praise the mount, I'm fixed upon it  
Mount of Thy redeeming love

Here I raise my Ebenezer  
Here there by Thy great help I've come  
And I hope, by Thy good pleasure  
Safely to arrive at home  
Jesus sought me when a stranger  
Wandering from the fold of God  
He, to rescue me from danger  
Interposed His precious blood

Oh, to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be  
Let that goodness like a fetter  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it  
Prone to leave the God I love  
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it  
Seal it for Thy courts above  
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it  
Seal it for Thy courts above

## PRAYER

Almighty God, we thank you for the promise and fulfilment of your word to us today that Christ is Immanuel God with us. We have been reminded of Christ's words 'Lo I am with you even unto the end of the age.' We are comforted and filled with joy inexpressible because we have come to know by faith that Christ is the Lord who redeems us from our sins and gives us peace with God.

During these difficult and unsettling days, we again remember and give thanks for all the wonderful NHS staff and emergency services, key workers and many more who continue to serve our communities at this difficult time.

We remember Employers and employees and all who are anxious about wages and costs of living. We pray for teaching staff in primary & secondary schools, colleges and Universities who are doing their very best to help and encourage students with their studies.

We ask that Christ's great comfort would be known especially to families who are mourning the loss of loved ones and families who are worried for loved ones undergoing treatments of any kind.

We give thanks, O God, for your mercies that are new every morning and we remember the words we read earlier from Psalm 121 that our God neither slumbers nor sleeps. In this day of your mercy we give thanks for confidence in prayer that you hear us and answer us in peace.

## BENEDICTION

**And now may the grace of the Lord  
Jesus Christ, the Love of God and the  
fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us  
all this day and forevermore, Amen.**