

2ND AUGUST 2020

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

Martin Luther said, "Let the people who would hear God speak read Holy Scripture."

HYMN

1 A wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord,
a wonderful Saviour to me;
He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock,
where rivers of pleasure I see.

Refrain:

*He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock
that shadows a dry, thirsty land;
He hideth my life in the depths of His love,
and covers me there with His hand,
and covers me there with His hand.*

2 A wonderful Saviour is Jesus my Lord,
He taketh my burden away;
He holdeth me up, and I shall not be moved,
He giveth me strength as my day. [Refrain]

3 With numberless blessings each moment He
crowns,
and filled with His fullness divine,
I sing in my rapture, oh, glory to God
for such a Redeemer as mine! [Refrain]

4 When clothed in His brightness, transported I
rise
to meet Him in clouds of the sky,
His perfect salvation, His wonderful love
I'll shout with the millions on high. [Refrain]

PRAYER

Gracious heavenly Father, you have given this word to us through our Lord Jesus Christ and by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We pray that you would turn our minds to your truth and illumine them by it, that you would touch our affections that they may be enflamed with love for Him who speaks to us. We pray that you would come and bend our stubborn wills, that we may more and more hunger and thirst for that moment when the signs of Christ's death for us are given to us in the presence of Him who now is with us and speaks to us. So come, Lord, we are your guests and we pray that you would instruct us as our host, and we pray this in Jesus Christ's great name. Amen.

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
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.*

SCRIPTURE READING

1 SAMUEL 3: 1 - 21 (NKJV)

1 Then the boy Samuel ministered to the Lord before Eli. And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation. 2 And it came to pass at that time, while Eli was lying down in his place, and when his eyes had begun to grow so dim that he could not see, 3 and before the lamp of God went out in the tabernacle of the Lord where the ark of God was, and while Samuel was lying down, 4 that the Lord called Samuel. And he answered, "Here I am!"

5 So he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." And he said, "I did not call; lie down again." And he went and lay down.

6 Then the Lord called yet again, "Samuel!" So Samuel arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." He answered, "I did not call, my son; lie down again."

7 (Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord, nor was the word of the Lord yet revealed to him.)

8 And the Lord called Samuel again the third time. Then he arose and went to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you did call me." Then Eli perceived that the Lord had called the boy.

9 Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down; and it shall be, if He calls you, that you must say, 'Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.' " So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

10 Now the Lord came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel answered, "Speak, for Your servant hears."

11 Then the Lord said to Samuel: "Behold, I will do something in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle.

12 In that day I will perform against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end.

13 For I have told him that I will judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knows, because his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them.

14 And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever."

15 So Samuel lay down until morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord. And Samuel was afraid to tell Eli the vision.

16 Then Eli called Samuel and said, "Samuel, my son!" And he answered, "Here I am."

17 And he said, "What is the word that the Lord spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. God do so to you, and more also, if you hide anything from me of all the things that He said to you."

18 Then Samuel told him everything, and hid nothing from him. And he said, "It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him."

19 So Samuel grew, and the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground.

20 And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel had been established as a prophet of the Lord.

21 Then the Lord appeared again in Shiloh. For the Lord revealed Himself to Samuel in Shiloh by the word of the Lord.

SERMON

Many of the great figures of the Bible began their careers with a dramatic call from the Lord, including Abraham, Moses, the prophet Isaiah, and the apostle Paul. Samuel's importance in Bible history is seen by his inclusion on this list of chosen and specifically called servants of the Lord.

Popular literature likes to picture a little boy Samuel answering God's summons in the temple, but it is more likely that enough years had passed for Samuel to have at least entered his teenage years. In chapter two, we read that "the young man Samuel continued to grow" (v. 26), and in 3:2 we read that Eli was now so old that his "eyesight had begun to grow dim."

Whereas chapter 2 compared little Samuel to the wicked sons of Eli, chapter 3 describes him in contrast to aged Eli. While Eli is growing blind, young Samuel receives a vision of the Lord. While Eli was "lying down in his own place," suggesting a room or chamber beside the temple, "Samuel was lying down in the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was" (1 Sam. 3:3). Samuel was in effect filling Eli's shoes, and now he would be formally installed by God in Eli's place. And just as Israel's spiritual frailty followed Eli's blind infirmity, now the Word of the Lord will come to Israel through the spiritual vigour of young Samuel.

The setting for Samuel's calling is provocatively stated: "The lamp of God had not yet gone out" (1 Sam. 3:3). This indicates that it was in the early hours before dawn that God called to Samuel, since the lamps were kept lit until morning. But this was also symbolically true: the lamp of God's presence in Israel was dim but not completely gone. In such a setting, the voice of the Lord was once more heard within His house: "Then the LORD called to Samuel" (1 Sam. 3:4). What grace there is in those brief words! At a time when God's Word had been violated and trampled on by even the high priests' sons, when God's injured law provided every reason for a judgment of eternal divine silence, yet still the voice of the Lord was heard calling to a child of His covenant.

And yet, in the most tragic irony, even the most devoted and most worthy of God's servants did not know His voice! "Here I am!" cried Samuel, and then ran to Eli's chamber. But Eli replied, "I did not call; lie down again" (1 Sam. 3:4-5). The Lord called to Samuel again and the same thing happened. Verse 7 explains why: "Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, and the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him" (1 Sam. 3:7). This makes the simple point that Samuel had never heard God's voice before, so he did not recognise it. But it also implies that since Samuel, Israel's brightest and best, did not know the voice of the Lord he also did not really know God. While we would not say that Samuel was an unbeliever, "Samuel did not yet have the intimate knowledge of personal relationship with the Lord." This was about to change, and as always salvation would come to Samuel and Israel by the gracious call of God's Word.

The third time God called Samuel he appeared again in Eli's chamber; the high priest suspected what was happening. "Go, lie down," he said, "and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant hears'" (1 Sam. 3:9).

The calling of Samuel not only reveals God's grace, both in simply returning to Israel with His Word and also in His patience with Samuel's lack of understanding, but it provides a remarkable instance of prophetic inspiration. For here we see not merely the calling of a prophet, but of the first in the long line of prophets who will serve under Israel's kings. As such, the way that the Word of the Lord comes to Samuel sets a precedent for God's revelation through the prophets.

The apostle Peter gave the classic formula of divine inspiration: "No prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). In other words, prophecy and inspiration do not begin with the thoughts of the human author but by the hearing of God's Word. The men who wrote the Bible "spoke from God," that is, they delivered to us the message that God gave to them. Moreover, the entire process was supervised (or "carried along") "by the Holy Spirit."

Another classic definition of inspiration was given by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is breathed out by God." When we say that the Bible was inspired by God, what we should really be saying is that God's revelation was "breathed out" or "expired" from God's own mouth. In the Bible we read God's Word to man, communicated through his Spirit-inspired and Spirit-supervised messengers, so that the writer of Hebrews can simply declare, "God spoke... by the prophets" (Heb. 1:1). Just as God spoke to Samuel so as to provide His Word to Eli, and later to reveal His Word to all Israel, so also God spoke to all the prophets and apostles so that His revealed Word might be provided to all of us from the Bible.

The Bible shows considerable variation how God's messengers experienced inspiration. Much of the Bible consists of historical narratives that were written by known or unknown human authors.

The psalms are poems and songs written by David and others to express their spiritual experience and devotion to God. The New Testament epistles are actual letters written by the apostles to the early churches. All these kinds of Scripture are the Word of God as inspired and superintended by the Holy Spirit.

But here at the beginning of the prophetic era, in the calling of Samuel, we see the most basic form of divine revelation. God appears to young Samuel and speaks a message for him to record and pass on. This "dictation" approach is often denigrated in academic scholarship, as if it is somehow unworthy for God to speak to His creatures in this way. But, in fact, much of the prophetic material is presented as having been dictated verbally by God and written down more or less verbatim by the prophets. The prophets do not tell us that they have been wrestling with ideas that they now want to share with us. Instead, they uniformly tell us, "the Word of the Lord came to me" (Jer. 1:4; cf. Isa. 2:1; Eze. 1:3; Hos. 1:1; Jon. 1:1; Mic. 1:1; etc.) and "thus says the LORD" (Amos 1:3; Obad. 1:1; Nah. 1:12; etc.).

Here, God appears to Samuel in person, in a divine visitation (most of the prophets also received visions, which is why they are called "seers") and presents a verbal message for him to pass on. This is the basic model for all Scripture, the theme on which numerous variations are played, so that in whatever form the Bible presents itself we can know that we are reading what God has committed to His servants to be communicated to us. As such, we are duty-bound to receive all that the Bible teaches as God's own Word, carrying God's divine authority, and demanding our trusting belief and obedient response.

Today, we have what Eli and his sons did not have: the completed revelation of God's Word in the Bible. With the coming of Jesus Christ, God's revelation is completed, and the church possesses God's final written Word as we await the return of our Lord. Yet the famine of the Word of God can be just as severe because of our lack of interest in God's Word. Revival and reformation in the church, and in our individual lives, can only come in the same manner as it came to the Israel of Samuel's day: by the restoring of the divine Word in the hearts and minds of God's people.

This has been God's way throughout history. It was by His Word that God brought the universe into being (Gen. 1:1-26). It was by His Word that God called Abraham, Moses, and Samuel into His service, and through them that He called and gathered His people. Peter wrote that Christians "have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God" (1 Pet. 1:23). David rejoiced that God's Word is "perfect, reviving the soul"; "sure, making wise the simple"; "right, rejoicing the heart"; "pure, enlightening the eyes"; and "true and righteous altogether" (Ps. 19:7- 9). This is what we have written for us to read in our Bibles: God's Word which brings life for salvation into our souls. Realising this made John Wesley cry out: "O give me that book! At any price give me the Book of God!"

When God's Word returns to His people there is always a return of life. Spiritual revival always involves the hearing and speaking of God's Word. When the Word is heard and spoken the result is that God's Word is experienced with power for growth and godliness and witness to others.

So, it was for Samuel. A new day had begun in his life and ministry as he began hearing and speaking God's Word to the people. The result was that "Samuel grew, and the LORD was with him" (1 Sam. 3:19). To serve Jesus Christ, hearing and speaking His Word, is to continually grow. The apostle Paul experienced the thrill of this, writing late in his life, "Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own" (Phil. 3:12). Those were not words of cynical resignation, but rather of excitement and eager anticipation. There is growth in the Lord through His Word!

If we study passages describing a Christ-like character - such as the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 or the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22- 23 - the truth is that not one of us perfectly reflects the biblical ideal. But the exciting news is that as we walk with the Lord, abiding in His Word, we continually grow in spiritual power, purity, peace, and joy.

Are you willing to echo young Samuel's words, saying to God, "Here I am, Lord, for you called me. Speak, your servant is listening"? There is every reason why you should. Paul reminds us that God has proved His good will toward us by sending His own Son to die for our sins on the cross. He reasons, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). Jesus said, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all [other] things will be added to you" (Mt. 6:33). He added, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life" (Mk. 10:29-30).

These are very good reasons for us to answer God when He calls. But the best reason is the one that caused young Samuel to come swiftly to aged Eli when he thought the high priest was calling: because he loved him, and he delighted to serve him. The apostle John wrote, "In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). The more clearly we realise how great is God's love for us and the preciousness of the gift of His Son to die for our sins, the more fervently we will love Him, the more grateful we will be that He spoke His Word to our heart, and when He calls we will delight to reply, "Here I am, Lord, for you called me."

HYMN

Pass me not, O gentle Saviour
Hear my humble cry
While on others Thou art calling
Do not pass me by

Saviour, Saviour
Hear my humble cry
While on others Thou art calling
Do not pass me by

Let me at Thy throne of mercy
Find a sweet relief
Kneeling there in deep contrition
Help my unbelief



WORSHIP UPDATE

*Saviour, Saviour
Hear my humble cry
While on others Thou art calling
Do not pass me by*

*Trusting only in Thy merit
Would I seek Thy face
Heal my wounded, broken spirit
Save me by Thy grace*

*Saviour, Saviour
Hear my humble cry
While on others Thou art calling
Do not pass me by*

PRAYER

Our heavenly Father, thank you that you have made the Lord Jesus such a great Saviour for us and such a gracious friend. We want to respond to Him with all our hearts and to say we do want this man who is the God man to reign over us. We pray this in His name. Amen.

It is now 4 months since we last gathered for worship at Ferintosh Parish Church. So much has taken place since then and the world we are used to will be different from now on.

Given the necessary restrictions imposed on us all and the limits on numbers able to gather it is not possible for us to meet as a congregation and this position is likely to last for a number of months yet.

In order that when we are able to meet as a congregation we do so safely and in a controlled manner a small group of our Kirk Session Elders are working on plans and risk assessments for the use of our church and hall. This work is a requirement of Ross Presbytery in order that any use of a church building has been given proper consideration. These plans and assessments will be important to have for the point where the Government and Presbytery consider it possible for congregations to meet subject to certain limits and behaviour. The group will present their plan to the Kirk Session and then it will be implemented or amended as required by the current advice at that time.

In the meantime please continue to support those around you and share the Worship at Home with friends or neighbours.

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.