

13TH SEPTEMBER 2020

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

*"There may be some sins of which a man cannot speak, but
there is no sin which the blood of Christ cannot wash away."
(C. H. Spurgeon)*

HYMN

I hear the saviour say
Thy strength indeed is small
Child of weakness watch and pray
Find in me thine all in all

*Jesus paid it all
All to him I owe
Sin had left a crimson stain
He washed it white as snow*

Lord, now indeed I find
Thy power and thine alone
Came and changed the lepers spots
And it melt the heart of stone [Refrain]

And when before the throne
I stand in him complete
Jesus died my soul to save
My lips shall still repeat [Refrain]

PRAYER

Father, we pray this morning that You would use the sheer wonder of Your word to open our eyes again to this principle that we are saved by faith in Christ alone and not by our works, a principle that lasts throughout the whole of the Christian life, that we live by the same kind of faith that looks away from ourselves and looks to Christ. Help us to gaze upon Him today that all who believe may be thrilled to the very depths of our being that You set your love upon us before the foundation of the world. Help us to worship in spirit and in truth we pray in Jesus 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
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.*



SCRIPTURE READING

1 SAMUEL 12:1-25 (NKJV)

1 Now Samuel said to all Israel: "Indeed I have heeded your voice in all that you said to me, and have made a king over you.

2 And now here is the king, walking before you; and I am old and grayheaded, and look, my sons are with you. I have walked before you from my childhood to this day.

3 Here I am. Witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed: Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received any bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you."

4 And they said, "You have not cheated us or oppressed us, nor have you taken anything from any man's hand."

5 Then he said to them, "The Lord is witness against you, and His anointed is witness this day, that you have not found anything in my hand." And they answered, "He is witness."

6 Then Samuel said to the people, "It is the Lord who raised up Moses and Aaron, and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt.

7 Now therefore, stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord concerning all the righteous acts of the Lord which He did to you and your fathers:

8 When Jacob had gone into Egypt, and your fathers cried out to the Lord, then the Lord sent Moses and Aaron, who brought your fathers out of Egypt and made them dwell in this place.

9 And when they forgot the Lord their God, He sold them into the hand of Sisera, commander of the army of Hazor, into the hand of the Philistines, and into the hand of the king of Moab; and they fought against them.

10 Then they cried out to the Lord, and said, 'We have sinned, because we have forsaken the Lord and served the Baals and Ashtoreths; but now deliver us from the hand of our enemies, and we will serve You.'

11 And the Lord sent Jerubbaal, Bedan, Jephthah, and Samuel, and delivered you out of the hand of your enemies on every side; and you dwelt in safety.

12 And when you saw that Nahash king of the Ammonites came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' when the Lord your God was your king.



SERMON

13 "Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen and whom you have desired. And take note, the Lord has set a king over you.

14 If you fear the Lord and serve Him and obey His voice, and do not rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then both you and the king who reigns over you will continue following the Lord your God.

15 However, if you do not obey the voice of the Lord, but rebel against the commandment of the Lord, then the hand of the Lord will be against you, as it was against your fathers.

16 "Now therefore, stand and see this great thing which the Lord will do before your eyes:

17 Is today not the wheat harvest? I will call to the Lord, and He will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking a king for yourselves."

18 So Samuel called to the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day; and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel.

19 And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we may not die; for we have added to all our sins the evil of asking a king for ourselves."

20 Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart.

21 And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing.

22 For the Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people.

23 Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way.

24 Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you.


25 But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king."

Unlike Christians today, Samuel did have power to perform miracles, and he judged his farewell address to be a good time for a demonstration that would place an exclamation point on his message:

"Now therefore stand still and see this great thing that the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest today? I will call upon the LORD, that he may send thunder and rain. And you shall know and see that your wickedness is great, which you have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking for yourselves a king." So, Samuel called upon the LORD, and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel (1 Sam. 12:16-18).

First, Samuel reminded them that it was a time of year when no strong rains fell, and then promised a miracle that should set a seal on his call for their repentance. He then called on the Lord and a violent thunderstorm immediately came upon them, "and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel" (1 Sam. 12:18). I do not know if Samuel enjoyed going out from his rule over Israel in such style, but his point was well made. He was not, after all, departing completely from the affairs of Israel. Though no longer a ruling judge over the people, he remained a prophet of the Lord, and therefore one who spoke with authority and power to both people and king.

The terrified people responded by calling on Samuel to intercede for them with God: "All the people said to Samuel, 'Pray for your servants to the LORD your God, that we may not die, for we have added to all our sins this evil, to ask for ourselves a king'" (1 Sam. 12:19). Here was a sincere confession of sin, if not one that had been readily given. The people acknowledged that their whole history was one of disobedience and rebellion, and that they had entered into the ungodly line by asking for a king like all the other nations, in the place of God. Better late than never, we say! They did the right thing in confessing their sin, and also in asking Samuel to mediate with God on their behalf.



On the one hand, the plea for a mediator indicated a great problem. We need a mediator to speak on our behalf with a lord from whom we ourselves fear judgment. Notice that the people spoke to Samuel, referring to the Lord as “your God,” and that instead of going to the Lord in prayer themselves, they asked him to “pray for your servants to the Lord” (1 Sam. 12:19). This is practically a quote from the lips of Pharaoh, after God had broken his will through the angel of death that slew his firstborn son. Finally, Moses and Israel would be permitted to leave Egypt, and Pharaoh approached Moses for a favour. “Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone,” Pharaoh ordered, and then asked, “and bless me also” (Ex. 12:32). Pharaoh had no basis for approaching God himself and no standing in God’s presence, so he had to ask someone who did have God’s favour to pray to God for him. Now all of Israel, through their own idolatry and wickedness, had degraded themselves to the status that Pharaoh occupied before God’s wrath, and they could only ask the man of God in their midst to pray to the Lord on their behalf.

Samuel responded as all of God’s servants respond with an earnest plea for spiritual help, and he sets an instructive example for how we should respond to non-Christian people who ask our spiritual help. Samuel was more than willing to pray for them: “as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD by ceasing to pray for you,” this being the duty of any man of God. But he offered more, “and I will instruct you in the good and the right way” (1 Sam. 12:23). This is precisely how we should answer unbelieving family and friends who ask for our prayers: “I will pray for you, but I also want to tell you how you may have the right to prayer for yourself.”

Secondly, Samuel reassured them of God’s gracious goodwill: “Do not be afraid” (1 Sam. 12:20). We likewise have the privilege of informing people of God’s kindness and love for them in Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, Samuel acknowledged their sin but directed them to its remedy: “You have done all this evil. Yet do not turn aside from following the Lord but serve the Lord with all your heart. And do not turn aside after empty things that cannot profit or deliver, for they are empty” (1 Sam. 12:20-21). Samuel was referring to the false and empty gods, reminding them and us that we cannot follow the Lord while still pursuing the idolatries of the world, including greed, lust, pride, and malice.

Fourthly, Samuel reminded them of God’s covenant promises: “For the LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself” (1 Sam. 12:22). God would honour His promises of salvation primarily for the honour of His own name, so they could be sure that He would be true to all that He had pledged to them. Likewise, we can be certain that God will fulfil His gospel pledge to everyone who believes: Jesus said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24).

These are messages that we must believe for ourselves, as well as tell to others: we must remember God’s goodwill for sinners through Jesus Christ, confess our sins and turn to Him for salvation, and believe His gospel promises that pledge His unfailing mercy and grace to those who follow Him in sincere faith. This was Samuel’s final message as He laid down His judgeship, though retaining His office as prophet of the Lord: “Only fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart. For consider what great things he has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king” (1 Sam. 12:24-25). King or no king was not really the issue: faith in the Lord or rebellion against His sovereign will is the single matter that decides our eternal destiny and our relationship with God during this life.

With these words, the narrative of 1 Samuel transitions from its focus on Samuel to a new focus on King Saul. Samuel had been a faithful servant of the Lord, as the people attested, and a truly great man of God. Yet, when the Ammonite hoard began pouring into the eastern regions of Israel, the elders of Israel looked on aged Samuel, and on his unruly sons, and decided they needed to look elsewhere for salvation, demanding the king whom God had now given in Saul the son of Kish.

We might honour Samuel's legacy by recounting all the things that made him great. But a better way to honour him would be to look through him to see reasons why Jesus Christ is a better Saviour, King, and Mediator, in whom we may find all that we need to the eternal salvation of our souls.

First, while the people asked Samuel to mediate on their behalf with God, we have the better privilege of approaching God's throne through the mediation of Jesus. For all his virtue, Samuel remained a sinner; even he could not ultimately stand before God on his own merits. Like Israel and like us, in the end, Samuel would have to take up the words that Pharaoh had begged of Moses: "Would you please bless me and intercede for me with God?" Jesus is no mere holy man, but He is the God-man, Immanuel, which means "God with us". God the Son who took up flesh to bring His people to God (Isa. 7:14; Heb. 2:14-17). Paul states it plainly: "There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). Jesus is the one completely sinless man, who does not need His own Saviour before the holy law of God, and who as the Son of God is able to offer His death for the forgiveness of everyone who believes in Him and calls on God's name through His salvation.

Second, Jesus is a better mediator than Samuel because He never grows old and feeble. Under Israel's monarchy, even the best of kings grew old and ultimately died, so that the people had to tremble at what awaited under the new regime. But the kingdom of God knows no such anxiety. Jesus our King, who died for our sins, has risen from the grave into eternal resurrection life. The writer of Hebrews says that Jesus' priesthood is eternal, and the same is true of His office as prophet and as king: He reigns "permanently, because he continues forever. Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:24-25).

Lastly, while Samuel displayed a power of rhetoric and prophetic preaching that stirs the soul, and backed it up even with a striking miracle that awed his hearers, yet his words lacked the power in themselves to change the heart. How different is the Lord Jesus Christ, who speaks and preaches with the power and persuasion of the Holy Spirit? Jesus alone can say, "My words... are spirit and life" (John 6:63). If we will call upon His name, the name of God's only Son and the Saviour of the world, if we will enter into His kingdom through faith, and if we will open our hearts to His living and mighty words, Jesus says that we will have eternal life. Faithful Samuel pointed us to the Lord, saying, "Fear the LORD and serve him faithfully with all your heart" (1 Sam. 12:24). Jesus, the very Lord to whom Samuel pointed, calls to us saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (John 8:12).

PSALM 103

1. O Thou my soul, bless God the Lord;
And all that in me is
Be stirred up his holy name
To magnify and bless
2. Bless, O my soul, the Lord thy God;
And not forgetful be
Of all his gracious benefits he
Hath bestow'd on thee.
3. All thine iniquities who doth
Most graciously forgive;
Who thy diseases all and pains
Doth heal, and thee relieve.
4. Who doth redeem thy life, that thou to
Death may'st not go down;
Who thee with loving kindness doth
And tender mercies crown.
5. Who with abundance of good things
Doth satisfy thy mouth;
So that ev'n as the eagle's age,
Renewed is thy youth. Amen

PRAYER

Our heavenly Father, we thank you, whatever our situation today that our Lord Jesus Christ is full of grace and that there is in Him more grace than there is sin in us and more joy than there may be sorrow in us today. And so, we pray that as we trust in Him we may know what He meant when he said, "I want my joy to be in you so that your joy may be full." Thank you, Father, for giving us a joyful Saviour. Make us joyful Christians we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.



WORSHIP UPDATE

It is now over 5 months since we last gathered for worship at Ferintosh Parish Church. So much has taken place since then and the world we were 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 Kirk Session met on Thursday 10th September to considering the plans and risk assessments. Work is now underway to determine the feasibility of opening the church under the current restrictions.

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.