

20TH SEPTEMBER 2020

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

"If I could hear Christ praying for me in the next room, I would not fear a million enemies. Yet distance makes no difference.

He is praying for me."

(R. M. M'Cheyne)

HYMN

1 And can it be that I should gain
An int'rest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! how can it be
That Thou, my God, should die for me?

2 He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, it found out me.

3 No condemnation now I dread;
Jesus, and all in Him is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
And clothed in righteousness divine,
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

PRAYER

Gracious Lord, Your Name is love, in love receive our prayer. Look to the cross of Your beloved Son and view the preciousness of His atoning blood; Listen to His never-failing intercession, and speak to our hearts, 'your sins are forgiven, be of good cheer.' Give to us more and more to prize the privilege of prayer, to find pardon in Christ, to converse with You; to know You in prayer as the path in which our feet tread, the latch upon the door of our lips, the marrow of our understanding, the strength of our will, the power of our affection and the sweetness of our memory. May the matter of our prayer be always wise, humble, scriptural, Christ-like. Give Your people unwavering faith that our prayers are never in vain. You have given us the greatest gift, the person of Your Son, and in Him You will give us all we need.

(Prayer from 'A collection of puritan prayers')



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 13:1-14 (NKJV)

1 Saul reigned one year; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,

2 Saul chose for himself three thousand men of Israel. Two thousand were with Saul in Michmash and in the mountains of Bethel, and a thousand were with Jonathan in Gibeath of Benjamin. The rest of the people he sent away, every man to his tent.

3 And Jonathan attacked the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba, and the Philistines heard of it. Then Saul blew the trumpet throughout all the land, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear!"

4 Now all Israel heard it said that Saul had attacked a garrison of the Philistines, and that Israel had also become an abomination to the Philistines. And the people were called together to Saul at Gilgal.

5 Then the Philistines gathered together to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen, and people as the sand which is on the seashore in multitude. And they came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth Aven.

6 When the men of Israel saw that they were in danger (for the people were distressed), then the people hid in caves, in thickets, in rocks, in holes, and in pits.

7 And some of the Hebrews crossed over the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. As for Saul, he was still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling.

8 Then he waited seven days, according to the time set by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattered from him.

9 So Saul said, "Bring a burnt offering and peace offerings here to me." And he offered the burnt offering.

10 Now it happened, as soon as he had finished presenting the burnt offering, that Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him, that he might greet him.

11 And Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash,

12 then I said, 'The Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.' Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering."

13 And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you. For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever.

14 But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you."

SERMON

The statement for which this passage is justly famous is Samuel's teaching regarding God's desire for a man "after his own heart." Samuel told Saul: "The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you" (1 Sam. 13:14).

This statement anticipates the calling of David as king, yet it is primarily a general statement of God's purpose. God is seeking "a man after his own heart." This is what God is looking for in this world: obedience to His will. This shows the quality of a true king and leader: one who receives God's approval through faithful submission and service.

This shows us the importance of the test that Saul received. God was giving him a chance to be such a person: under the stress that Saul experienced his reliance upon God would be tested and revealed. If Saul, with his followers scattering and the Philistines advancing in great strength, would hold fast to God's Word, this would show that his heart was wholly given to the Lord. As it happened, the test revealed the opposite about Saul, so that he was proved unfit to reign over God's people and kingdom. Saul's test was not the first such trial given by the Lord, nor the last. The first is recorded at the beginning of the Bible, when Adam underwent a similar trial on our behalf of our entire race:

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:15-17).

Like Saul, had Adam kept this covenant when under the duress of Satan's temptation, then surely what God said of Saul would have been true for Adam as well: "For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever" (1 Sam. 13:13). But Adam failed the test, plunging our race under the curse of sin, leaving God still searching for man after His own heart.

As we continue in 1 Samuel, we will see that King David answers God's quest, at least provisionally, and David is enthroned as the king after the Lord's heart. When it comes to David's trial with Goliath the giant (1 Sam. 17) or with King Saul in the cave at Adullam (1 Sam. 24:6), David obeys the Word of God under the greatest stress. Therefore God promised to establish David's house as the eternal kingdom, not through sinful David but through the son whom God would give: "I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (2 Sam. 7:12-13). That Son and eternal king would later come in fulfillment of God's prophecy to David's hometown of Bethlehem: "from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from old, from ancient days" (Mic. 5:2).



HYMN

The New Testament reveals this promised Son, the man truly and fully after God's own heart, as Jesus our Saviour. Like King Saul, Jesus' ministry began with a sore trial: Jesus' temptation in the wilderness. How greatly it must have rejoiced the Father's heart when His Son honoured Him before the trials of Satan, passing every test through obedience to the Word of God: "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'" (Lk. 4:4); "It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve'" (Lk. 4:8); "It is said, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test'" (Lk. 4:12).

Jesus' success as the man after God's own heart means that we have a king who reigns secure from an eternal throne. Hebrews 1:8-9 rejoices: "of the Son he says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions.'" Furthermore, through Jesus' righteousness we have a mediator who reconciles the fallen children of Adam through His own perfect obedience. Paul explains: "as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:18-19).

Jesus' obedience therefore establishes the pattern for His own work in our lives. He leads us into His own likeness, that we might be men and women after God's own heart in Him, through obedience to God's Word and by the power of the Holy Spirit that Jesus sends: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Heb. 8:10). God's work in the followers of His royal Son is to make us men and women after God's own heart. And as we trust God in this way, we will have nothing to fear from the Philistines of this world, knowing that like His Son, in whom God is well pleased, we are the apple of His eye and He will let nothing touch us apart from His own good will for our salvation.

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He, whose word cannot be broken,
Formed thee for His own abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou may'st smile at all thy foes.

See, the streams of living waters,
Springing from eternal love,
Well supply thy sons and daughters,
And all fear of want remove:
Who can faint, while such a river
Ever flows their thirst to assuage?
Grace which, like the Lord, the giver,
Never fails from age to age.

Saviour, if in Zion's city
I, through grace, a member am,
Let the world deride or pity,
I will glory in Thy name:
Fading is the sinner's pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting treasure
None but Zion's children know.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we come before you and give thanks for Your Precious Son Jesus Christ. We thank you for the cross on which the Saviour died, and in response may our richest gain be counted loss and pour contempt on all our pride. We remember how Christ was thankful on the night before the crucifixion. How He broke bread and gave thanks that His body would be broken for sinners. That He would become our substitute, taking upon Himself our sin and imputing righteousness to His people.

The joy before Christ was God's people who are to Him the rescued lamb laid across the Good Shepherd's shoulders, the lost coin found, the Prodigal Son embraced. We ask that You would be near to us all as we continue to live in this new normal. Give us strength, grace, hope, patience and encouragement we pray in Jesus name, Amen.

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.

WORSHIP UPDATE

It is now over 6 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 has met on two occasions on-line to approve the plans and risk assessments which are now being considered by Presbytery. Work is now underway to determine the feasibility of opening the church under the current restrictions. A trial of recording worship from within the church will take place from 27th September for a number of weeks. This will be made available on-line.

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