

18TH OCTOBER 2020

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

"Let us then ascribe the whole work of grace to the pleasure of God's Will. God did not choose us because we were worthy, but by choosing us He makes us worthy." (Thomas Watson)

HYMN

Guide me, O thou great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
feed me till my want is o'er,
feed me till my want is o'er.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.
Strong Deliv'rer, strong Deliv'rer,
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield;
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside.
Death of death, and hell's Destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

PRAYER

O God, we pray that you would open our eyes and ears to see and understand your truth. Give us your Holy Spirit and anoint us with the Holy One that we may understand all things. Father, we pray that by Your grace that You would enable us not to become weary in well doing, but rather that our eyes might be upon Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. To His praise and glory we pray. 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 READINGS

GENESIS 1: 1 (NKJV)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

HEBREWS 11: 1 - 3 (NKJV)


1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

2 For by it the elders obtained a good testimony.

3 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

SERMON

We remember that when Moses began writing Genesis, he had already met God at the burning bush. Moses had been tending the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro when he saw a bush that "was burning, yet it was not consumed" (Ex. 3:2). There are no analogies for the being of God in nature, so God presented a supernatural analogy in the bush that burned but was not consumed. Just like the God who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, the blazing fire did not have an evident source and was not dependent on created materials. God's nature, likewise, is self-existing and self-sufficient. And just as God told Moses to approach with reverence, taking the sandals off his feet, we also should appreciate that the study of God's divine attributes as holy ground, calling for humble praise from our hearts.



Little children often begin their journey in theology by asking the question, "Who made the world?" a likely answer comes back, "Why, God made the world." This only prompts a second question: "Then who made God?" The answer is one of the most important things we can know: "No one made God. God has always existed." This is one of the most vital attributes of God, known as his aseity - meaning that God is from Himself; He is self-existing.

This statement does not mean that God created Himself. It is a logical absurdity for something that did not exist to cause itself to exist. Rather, aseity means that God exists eternally in and of Himself.

God has always existed, and His existence does not arise from anything or anyone else. James Henley Thornwell writes: "He leans upon nothing. He lives no borrowed life. He asks no leave to be. He is because He is." This is precisely what is in the name that God gave to Moses: "I AM THAT I AM." The self-existence of God is a logical necessity to explain the existence of everything else. This point is known as the cosmological argument for God. Since it is an absurdity to believe that you can start with nothing and end with something, there must be a being who possesses self-existence. Since something which once did not exist could not have caused itself to exist, there must be a being which is uncaused and is thus the cause of all else. R. C. Sproul states the case:

If something exists, then something somewhere, somehow has to have the power of being within it, or nothing would be. . . . Why is there something rather than nothing? What or where is self-existent reality? The Scriptures answer that question on the very first page of the Old Testament: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The first affirmation of Christianity is that God is the Creator. That God alone is eternal. That God alone has aseity. God alone has self-existence. God alone has the power of being within himself. The difference between the human being and the Supreme Being is being rather than non-being.

In Romans 1, Paul taught that God reveals His divine attributes to everyone by means of creation: "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made" (v. 20). The correct response, then, to the revelation of the self-existent God is to bow down and worship Him. Those who suppress the awareness of God and refuse to worship Him "are without excuse" (Rom. 1:20). The necessity of God to explain creation calls for faith in Him, and faith in Him calls for praise. As the writer of Hebrews urged: "let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29).

When we contemplate the Bible's first sentence, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," we must realise not only His self-existence but also the important matter of God's self-sufficiency. This means, since all things originate from God, that God has all things in Himself and therefore has no need for anything outside of Himself. Thornwell explains: "It means that God contains within Himself the fullness of perfection and blessedness - that nothing can be taken from Him and nothing added to Him." The Westminster Confession expresses this truth in classic terms:

God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things" (2.2).

This teaching may be hard to understand until we remember that all things originate from God, so that God has all things in Himself. The burning bush, by which God illustrated His self-existence, also symbolises His self-sufficiency: the fire did not depend on the bush for its fuel but burned by its own self-sufficient resources. Therefore, there was no lack in the bush that could dampen God's fire; likewise, since God's perfect sufficiency does not depend on anything that happens in His creation, there is nothing in all the universe that can add to His blessing or subtract from His fullness.

In his great chapter on faith, the writer of Hebrews began by noting that Christian faith begins at Genesis 1:1: "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible" (Heb. 11:3). Having understood that God exists and that all things are from Him, faith "must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him" (Heb. 11:6). The great issue of life, therefore, is to believe in God and seek a relationship with Him. We look up at the stars, so vast and far away – how can tiny specks like us meet and know our Creator?

The answer to this greatest of questions is given in the Bible, as it tells us that the Creator Himself has stepped across the boundary between heaven and earth in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the great Christian declaration. When Moses stood before the burning bush and received the command to go redeem Israel from Egypt, could he ever have imagined that the great "I AM" would Himself take up flesh in order to be the Redeemer who frees us from our sin?

It is precisely Jesus' claim that He is the "I AM" of the Old Testament, the God who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth. Once He was teaching at the temple and said, "Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day" (Jn. 8:56). His sceptical hearers scoffed that He was less than fifty years old and yet He spoke of seeing Abraham! (Jn. 8:57). Jesus answered: "I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!" When they tried to stone Him, Jesus walked away unscathed. Jesus later revealed His identity as the self-existent God to soldiers who had been sent to arrest Him. "Whom do you seek?" He asked, and they answered, "Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus looked at them and declared, "I am," and "they drew back and fell to the ground," quaking in the presence of the self-existent Creator.

Yet when we think of Jesus taking up God's holy name, it is mainly His gracious invitation to needy sinners that comes to mind. John's Gospel is famous for Jesus' great "I Am" statements. In them, He not only reveals His self-existent glory and His self-sufficient resources, but He offers them to any who will receive Him in humble faith.

"I am the bread of life," He said. "Whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (Jn. 6:35). "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live" (Jn. 11:25). "I am the way, the truth, and the life," Jesus declared. "No one comes to the Father except through me" (Jn. 14:6). By taking up this great name, "I AM," Jesus declared His own nature as the God who in the beginning created the heavens and the earth, the God who possesses all life and sufficiency in Himself, and who offers to bless those who come to Him in faith. He is sufficient even to remove the guilt of your sin, saying, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn. 10:11).

Perhaps the best news is that the Saviour Jesus is not only the self-existent, self-sufficient God, but like the Father is also immutable. Hebrews 13:8 says: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Therefore, He will treat you as He did with needy sinners in the Bible. If you seek the favour of God through the Son whom He has sent, you will not only find your meaning in the self-existent God, gain your fulfilment in the self-sufficient Creator, but when you receive the forgiveness of your sins at the cross of Jesus Christ you will know that your acceptance into the love and life of God will never change.

PARAPHRASE 26

1 Ho! ye that thirst, approach the spring
where living waters flow:
free to that sacred fountain all
without a price may go.

How long to streams of false delight
will ye in crowds repair?
How long your strength and substance waste
on trifles light as air?

Seek ye the LORD while yet His ear
is open to your call;
while offered mercy still is near,
before His footstool fall.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you that in your mercy you have given us your Word that we might know the Word made flesh, the Word of God the Father. We bow before your magnificent majesty. We acknowledge your authority over our lives. We wonder at your amazing grace. We delight in your demonstrated love for us in Christ. And we cast ourselves utterly on your mercy in Jesus' precious 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

The Kirk Session of Ferintosh Parish Church is pleased to announce that we plan to re-start services in the Church in Conon Bridge on a trial basis from Sunday 25th October. We would love for you to be there.

There will be two services each Sunday, the first at 11am and the second at 12.15pm. These services will run initially on a trial basis, in case the pandemic or weather cause further problems. Sadly, seating will be limited due to Scottish Government guidelines, so anyone wishing to attend must contact the Session Clerk, Martin McLauchlan, by Friday at 5pm prior to the service to book a place.

To book, either visit the church website, and complete and submit the online booking form at: ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk/booking or email the Session Clerk at SessionClerk@ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk and he will send you a link to the Booking Form for you to complete and submit. If you do not have access to the Internet, phone him on 01349 830303 and leave your name and phone number and he will get back to you as soon as he can to take your details.

Martin McLauchlan, Session Clerk



ALISTER MURRAY

Hi everyone, my name is Alister Murray and I'm a Candidate in Training for Word and Sacrament in the Church of Scotland. This week I have just began my 15 month probation at Ferintosh Parish Church. I'm originally from Buckie, and grew up attending Buckie South and West where I was also involved in the Boys Brigade. I studied Electrical Engineering at the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen, and during my studies became a Christian through the gospel preaching of Billy Graham in 1991. This was very much the answer to many years of my widowed mother's prayers.

After finishing my electrical engineering degree, I moved to Kendal and worked in Electricity Distribution for 18 years. During this time I was an active member of Parr Street Evangelical Church, where I began to sense God's call on my life to ministry, and subsequently applied to the Church of Scotland. After successfully completing my Period of Discernment in the Border Kirk, Carlisle, I left my job at Electricity NorthWest just over three years ago and moved to Maryburgh to begin study at the Highland Theological College in Dingwall. My three most recent Church of Scotland placements have been at Inverness St Columba (New Charge Development), North Uist (Kilmuir, Lochmaddy and Berneray) and most recently Nairn Old Parish Church.

I am really looking forward to meeting you all, in whatever manner is safe and appropriate in this unprecedented time for our Church and Nation. Most of all, I pray that we will grow together in our love, worship and service of the Lord Jesus Christ.
Alister

