

4TH OCTOBER 2020

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

"Let the people who would hear God speak read Holy Scripture."
(Martin Luther)

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

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 READINGS

GENESIS 1: 1 (NKJV)

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

ROMANS 1: 16 - 23 (NKJV)

6 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them.

20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

22 Professing to be wise, they became fools,
23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

SERMON

In the beginning, God... (Gen. 1:1). When we begin thinking about God, our first thought should concern the infinite distance between the Creator and the creation. We refer to this as the transcendence of God. People sometimes refer to God as the Supreme Being, which He certainly is. Compared to all other beings of every kind, God is categorically and infinitely above them all.

God is transcendent over everything else in terms of His nature. The Song of Moses asked, "Who is like you, O Lord... ? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?" (Ex. 15:11). The point is that there is nothing to which we may suitably compare God, and for this reason theology often relies on negative statements. Unable to declare adequately what God is, we resort to stating what He is not: God is infinite, not finite; independent, not dependent; immutable, not capable of change. The reason for this transcendence of nature is evident in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God." God existed prior to and wholly apart from His creation, so therefore nothing in the creation can encompass who and what He is. The Apostle Paul praises God as Him "who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see" (1 Tim. 6:16).

God is not only transcendent in nature but also in time. Genesis 1:1 declares that in the beginning God already was, which presents Him as an eternal being. Peter Lewis writes: "Before there was matter, time and space there was God: God who has no succession of moments in his own Being, God who alone is infinite and eternal, the uncreated Creator, unique in his eternity and all-sufficient in the infinite resources of his Being, the fullness of light, love, joy and meaning: 'From everlasting to everlasting you are God' (Ps. 90:2)." Contemplating such a God, believers find awe in worship and comfort in faith. Therefore, Abraham, during his otherwise perplexing journeys, "called. . . on the name of the Lord, the Everlasting God" (Gen. 21:33).

Genesis 1:1 not only pulls our thoughts infinitely far away in contemplating God's transcendence, but also draws our hearts near to a personal God who is also imminent. The very fact that "In the beginning, God created," indicates that He wills to be known and possess a relationship with those outside of Himself. The reason for this is that God is personal as well as transcendent. Being personal, God is known not merely in terms of impersonal characteristics, the way an object is measured, but in personal attributes.

In opposing the knowledge of God, unbelieving thinkers labour to support the idea of an impersonal original for all things, such as the Big Bang Theory. The reason for this quest is that a personal Creator implies that there is a divine will and purpose. We must relate to the God of the Bible on personal terms, and since He is our Creator this requires worship, submission, and obedience – the very things our rebellious world desires to avoid. Paul perfectly anticipated this situation in Romans 1:21, "For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him." A personal God is honoured and thanked for the great and good things He has provided, and this precludes us from acting as our own gods. Denying God's personal existence, Paul adds, mankind "became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Rom. 1:21).

Francis Schaeffer points out that everything that we know about creation points us exclusively towards a personal Creator: *Scientific study demonstrates that the universe has an express form. One can go from particulars to a greater unity, from the lesser laws to more and more general laws or super-laws. In other words, as I look at the Being which is the external universe, it is obviously not just a handful of pebbles thrown out there. What is there has form. If we assert the existence of the impersonal as the beginning of the universe, we simply have no explanation for this kind of situation.*

Since the impersonal cannot convey personhood, the greatest proof of God's personal nature is our self-awareness as persons. We have thoughts, feelings, and will, and all of these are possible only because they are also true of the Creator.

The denial of this is the depersonalising not only of God but also of ourselves. Schaeffer notes: "The assumption of an impersonal beginning cannot adequately explain the personal beings we see around us; and when men try to explain man on the basis of an original impersonal, man soon disappears."

In reality, since we are personal in our very nature, our deepest needs and longings can only be met by knowing the personal God who created all things. It is only a relational God who can guide us in pursuing loving human relationships, building just societies, and developing a culture of beauty and honour. Once God the person is abandoned, all basis for love, justice, and beauty are gone.

If you are hearing this then you are God's created person. He desires that you would enter into a personal, saving relationship with Him through His Incarnate Son, by the power of His Holy Spirit, so that through faith the Creator would become your Father in heaven.

Having met God on the doorstep of the biblical revelation in Genesis 1:1, how should His creatures respond to these things? Bruce Milne writes: "Clearly they call for a deep self-abasement of ourselves before his awesome majesty, and highlight our obligation to offer him an adoring, submissive worship. Truly, 'Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise' (Ps. 96:4)." In one of our beloved hymns, Christians sing of the praise to God for his creation: *O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the works thy hands have made, I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, thy power thro'ought the universe displayed Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee: How great thou art, how great thou art.*

When we get to the end of the Bible, we find that this impulse to worship God as Creator is fulfilled by the heavenly beings in glory: "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Rev. 4:11). This makes the point that our calling to worship God is grounded in the fact of God as our Creator.

For while Christians have abundant reasons to praise God for our redemption, everyone has every reason to glorify God as our Maker. A. W. Pink writes: "The wondrous and infinite perfections of such a Being call for fervent worship. If men of might and renown claim the admiration of the world, how much more should the power of God fill us with wonderment and homage."

Just as the Bible concludes with praise to God, our Creator and Redeemer, so also will history consummate in worship: *When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in humble adoration, and there proclaim, my God, how great thou art. Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee: How great thou art, how great thou art.*

HYMN

O Lord My God! when I in awesome wonder
consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed:

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,
'How great thou art, how great thou art!'
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to thee,
'How great thou art, how great thou art!'*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
and hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
when I look up from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze:

And when I think that God his Son not sparing,
sent him to die - I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,
he bled and died to take away my sin:

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
and take me home - what joy shall fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
and there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the riches of your word. We thank you for the privilege and pleasure that we share together as we study it, as it flows into our lives, and then flows out from our lives. We pray that more and more that we may become a people who know you intimately with a sense of awe and who have learned to pray in Jesus' way and in the Spirit's power. We delight in your goodness to us and we pray that you would help us to come to Christ on this Lord's Day with confidence and joy, we pray this 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

The Kirk Session met on Thursday 10th September to consider new plans and risk assessments. Work is now underway to determine the feasibility of opening the church under the current restrictions.

In the meantime, there will be a video of the sermon preached from the church placed on our Facebook page. This will be available each week along with the WAH material for the foreseeable future. Please continue to support those around you and share the Worship at Home with friends or neighbours.



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

