

22ND NOVEMBER 2020

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

"Hope fills the afflicted soul with such inward joy and consolation, that it can laugh while tears are in the eye, sigh and sing all in a breath; it is called "the rejoicing of hope" (Hebrews 3:6)."(William Gurnall)

PSALM 8

How excellent in all the earth,
Lord, our Lord, is thy name!
Who hast thy glory far advanc'd
above the starry frame.

When I look up unto the heav'ns,
which thine own fingers fram'd,
Unto the moon, and to the stars,
which were by thee ordain'd;

Fowls of the air, fish of the sea,
all that pass through the same.
How excellent in all the earth,
Lord, our Lord, is thy name!

PRAYER

Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank you that you know us through-and-through and that your word is able, first to find us and then to speak to us and then to transform us. We pray that by the power of your Holy Spirit this book that we read will live for us today in the grace and through the teaching of our Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ and so we come to you, our eyes are upon you, our hearts are full of affection for you, our wills bowed before you and we say to you, Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening. This 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
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: 14 - 19 (NKJV)

14 Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years;

15 and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so.

16 Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. He made the stars also.

17 God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth,

18 and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good.

19 So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

1 JOHN 1: 5 - 7 (NKJV)

5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

SERMON

We look on the fourth day of creation and see the heavenly lights that God placed into the expanse of the heavens. If we look forward in Scripture and ask how God later uses this imagery and language, the result is staggering. I say this because the imagery of the fourth day with its shining stars in the dark sky is applied consistently in Scripture of God's people who are redeemed through His covenant of grace. When Abraham complained about his lack of offspring, God took him out under the night sky and had him look upwards: "'Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.' Then he said to him, 'So shall your offspring be'" (Gen. 15:5). The New Testament assures us that this refers to Abraham's spiritual offspring, that is, those who join him through faith in the saving promises of God (Gal. 3:7). The contemporary Christian singer Rich Mullins puts it well: "Sometimes I think of Abraham, how one star he saw had been lit for me."

Given the Bible's own use of this imagery to describe believers, I would note that the assignments God gave to the heavenly lights provide a convenient summary of the believers' calling in following Christ. First, God put the lights in the heavens "to separate the day from the night" (Gen. 1:14). In like manner, God intends for us to clearly distinguish between faith and unbelief. There is the church and the world, holiness and sin, truth and error. We noted in our study of the third day that God created the world with clear distinctions, and He separated things that do not belong together. Likewise, Christians are to distinguish correctly, following carefully the path laid out in God's Word.

The great need of our generation is for Christians to know how to live in the world but not be of the world, who know how to separate light from darkness. Paul made this very point to the believers in Philippi, urging them to live carefully according to the light of God: "Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life" (Phil. 2:14-16).

To the Ephesians, Paul likewise called for holiness of life as Christians separated themselves, refusing to become partners with those committed to sin: "for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8).


Second, God created the heavenly lights to serve as signs for those living on the earth. A sign points to something or someone else. Christians are to be signs for others to see the grace and power of Jesus Christ in salvation. Jesus said in Revelation 22:16, "I am . . . the bright Morning Star." His work in us now is to equip us to bear testimony to His glory and grace before the world. He told us to hold fast, conquer by faith, and keep His works until the end (Rev. 2:25-26), and promised to each one: "I will give him the morning star" (Rev. 2:28). If you hold fast, live by faith, and pursue His works, Jesus will make you a lamp in which His own shining light will be seen.

Third, God made the heavenly lights "to give light upon the earth" (Gen. 1:15). In addition to our witness, Jesus applied this teaching to our calling to do good works to declare God's glory:

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 5:14-16).

Light illuminates, and we are to shine forth the way of salvation through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Light warms, and we are to extend the love of God in Christ to hurting people in the world. Light exposes, and the gracious, godly lifestyles of believers are to stand in stark contrast with the crude, ungodly pattern of this world. Light guides and directs. We are likewise to offer the wholesome truth of God's Word that our generation so greatly needs to hear.

Fourth, God made the sun and moon "to rule over the day and over the night" (Gen. 1:18). The point was that the sun and moon stand above their respective spheres, dominating the portion of time granted to them by God. This provocative language seems odd when spoken about impersonal objects, however great they are. Perhaps God spoke of the sun and moon ruling with an eye to the influence that Christians and the church are to have over each generation.



Christians rule not by force, compulsion, or pride. We reign with Christ through prayers that go from our hearts to the very throne of heaven above. Christians determine the course of the world by their willingness to stand for Jesus and God's truth against all opposition. It was Christians from this nation and America in the last two centuries who left the safety of their homes and took the gospel through great peril to darkened lands, often at the cost of their lives, and changed the world. It was a Christian like William Wilberforce who stood up before the House of Commons in England and demanded that the slave trade end. It is Christians today who stand up amidst a culture of death and plead for the dignity and value of every human life, whether born or unborn. It is the Christian in the classroom, in the workplace, in the family, or in the neighbourhood who offers hope of salvation through the gospel witness only he or she can provide.

In Revelation 5:10, the watching spirits in heaven give praise to Christ on behalf of His faithful, suffering, light-bearing church on earth, saying: "you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth." Do we realise that what we do as a church and as Christians is always the single most significant earthly factor in our culture and generation? If we do not stand fast in proclaiming God's truth from His Word, how will the world ever hear it? If we do not invite unbelieving friends to the salvation Jesus alone can give, how can they ever be redeemed? Do we fear the world and its power too much to play the role God has assigned to us? Then let us remember Moses standing before mighty Pharaoh and the gods of the Nile. The God who sends us today as lights in the world is the same God who delivered Moses and broke the false idols of that generation. He created the sun, moon, and stars and apportioned their tasks in the dawn of creation. May we, too, by faith in His great power, be faithful to shine the holy light so needed in our world today.

On the fourth day of history, God said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens" (Gen. 1:14). By God's Word, "it was so" (Gen. 1:15) and "God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1:18). On the last day of history, when Jesus returns, God will summon his true light-bearers. Revelation 7:9-10 anticipates the scene:

behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

The apostle John said of believers on that day, "We shall be like [Jesus], because we shall see him as he is" (1 Jn. 3:3). Will you be gathered in that resplendent number, shining like a star, after Jesus has returned? You can know that you will by trusting in Him now, confessing your sins, looking to His cross for your forgiveness, embracing Him as both Saviour and Lord. Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world." He promised that if you follow Him, living by His Word, opening your heart to Him in prayer, and walking as His true disciple, that you "will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12).

PSALM 27

The Lord's my light and saving health,
who shall make me dismayed?
My life's strength is the Lord, of whom
then shall I be afraid?

One thing I of the Lord desired,
and will seek to obtain,
That all days of my life I may
within God's house remain

That I the beauty of the Lord
behold may and admire,
And that I in his holy place
may reverently enquire.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we praise you that 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.

FERINTOSH FOCUS

It is planned, if there are sufficient contributions, to publish a December edition of the Ferintosh Focus. This may contain examples of how people coped with the restrictions to our lives and can be submitted, preferably with photos, to the Editor at strathdrynie@gmail.com. Any contributions must be received by Friday 27th November.

WORSHIP UPDATE

Services re-started in the Church in Conon Bridge on a trial basis on Sunday 25th October. Depending on demand there are planned to be two Sunday services, at 11am and 12.15pm. The services will run initially on a trial basis, and seating is limited to comply with guidelines. To attend you 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

Hello everyone !

I've started a weekly Zoom Coffee & Chat on Saturdays at 10am. We meet and catch up for some fellowship together for no more than an hour, and folks can come and go as they are able. If you would like to join us, please email me at Alister.Murray@churchofscotland.org.uk. Then I can add you to the weekly email invite that needs to be sent with the link to join the meeting. Look forward to hearing from you and seeing you if you can make it.

Alister Murray

