

3RD JANUARY 2021

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied: "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way." So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night. And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.

(Minnie Louise Haskins)



PSALM 27

1 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?

2 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;

3 That I the beauty of the Lord
behold may and admire,
And that I in his holy place
may rev'rently enquire.

4 Wait on the Lord, and be thou strong,
and he shall strength afford
Unto thine heart; yea, do thou wait,
I say, upon the Lord.

PRAYER

Our gracious God and heavenly Father, we thank you that you are our Father, 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 our Saviour's name. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READING

JOHN 15: 1 - 11 (NKJV)

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.

3 You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.



5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

9 "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.

10 If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.


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.*

SERMON

We should have the grateful, devoted attitude of David in Psalm 40:8, "I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart." The source of this submitted will is our knowledge of God's love for us, and its effect is our abiding in Christ. These very words were ascribed to Jesus in the New Testament (Heb. 10:7), so that His obedient love to the Father sets the pattern for our obedient love to Him: (Jn. 15:10) "just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love".

The greatest pleasure Jesus had on earth was in showing his love to the Father by obeying his commands. Likewise, our love for Christ and our abiding in him involves the submission of our will to his will, so that on the path of obedience that Jesus himself walked we have close fellowship with him.



Realising this, we are warned from thinking that abiding in Christ manifests itself in mystical experiences. Instead, abiding in Christ manifests itself in devoted obedience to his Word.

Jesus is describing a lifestyle of abiding in Him that moves from love to love. In the fourth chapter of his first epistle, John enlarges on this theme, stating that “in this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him” (1 Jn. 4:9).

Our defining reality as Christians, he says, is God’s love for us in Christ and Christ’s love for us on the cross. Both the Father and the Son continue to love us so that believers live through Christ, abiding in His love, living for His pleasure, and accepting His will as our own. John sums up the Christian life, saying, “We love because he first loved us” (1 Jn. 4:19), and the way that we show our love is through joyful obedience to His commands.

This was the mentality displayed by the aged bishop Polycarp, when the Roman proconsul urged him to renounce Jesus in order to escape being thrown to the beasts in the arena. Polycarp answered, “Eighty and six years have I served him, and he never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour?” Every Christian should reason the same: what wrong has Jesus ever done so that I might disobey the commands of Him who loved me so?

To abide in Christ is to be delivered from God’s judgment, since the branches that abide in Him bear fruit through their possession of saving life. How urgent it is that every professing believer actually abide in Christ – relying on His love, living in close fellowship with Jesus, and bearing the good fruit of obedience to the commands of the Bible.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins by telling us that man’s chief end is “to glorify God.” This highlights the importance of the third result of abiding in Christ, that in this way we glorify the Father. Jesus added, “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples” (Jn. 15:8).

This is an important statement, first, because it reminds us that we “prove” our discipleship by bearing fruit to the Lord. Jesus adds that the same fruit that grants us assurance of salvation also brings glory to the Father. This indicates that if we are not abiding in Christ and bearing the fruit of changed lives, then we are denying God glory that ought to be His.

It is easy for us to speak of praising God and to sing hallelujahs, but the way that God especially desires to be glorified in us is by our transformed lives. That our lives might contribute to the glory of the one, true, and eternal God ought to fill our hearts with wonder and amazement. But also, so that we might give something back to the God who has given His own Son for our salvation ought to spur us with great zeal for the glory of the Father.

Gordon Keddie writes that even the hard-hearted world “cannot but see the hand of God in the saving change of an otherwise corrupt sinner.” The unbeliever “may pour contempt on his friend who is converted and gives up his former ways, but he knows somehow that he protests too much and is really covering a deeper amazement at a change that he cannot explain.” The way for us to receive the most benefit from our faith is the same way that we are of maximum usefulness to the Lord, if we will abide in Christ, we will bear much fruit so as both to glorify the Father and prove our discipleship.

Jesus states that abiding in Christ fills us with joy: *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full (John 15:11)*. The world insists that turning from sin to follow Christ is bound to take all the pleasure out of life. Jesus insists that the exact opposite is in fact true. The way to possess true and abiding joy – not the joy of the world, but what Jesus calls “my joy” – is to abide in Him. It is obvious from this that we may fail to know the joy that ought to be ours. We lose our joy when our fellowship with Christ is broken through worldly distractions. Disobedience and unbelief steal our joy.

This is why David pled in his great prayer of repentance, “Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation” (Ps. 51:11-12). David missed the spiritual joy that he previously knew, and he pled with God not only to forgive him but also to restore his presence and therefore his joy.

Jesus found His joy in pleasing the Father through obedience. Leon Morris comments: "It is not cheerless, barren existence that Jesus plans for His people. But the joy of which he speaks comes only as they are wholehearted in their obedience to His commands." Jesus stated His desire that by abiding in him "your joy may be full" (Jn. 15:11). Jesus was not speaking here of a fairy-tale happiness in which all our worldly dreams come true. Jesus never promised a carefree life to His followers, but He did offer us fullness of joy as His life grows in us. Hebrews 12:2 says that "for the joy set before him" Jesus endured the cross, so that even that great baptism of suffering could not snuff out the eternal flame of His joy.

Abiding in Christ, as a living branch in the true vine, His life flows into us through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, so that our deep experience of blessing matures into the rich wine of spiritual joy as we abide in Him. Do you find that you long for the fullness of Christ's joy in your life? It is evident that Jesus longs for this, too. Indeed, there can be no greater object in love than for the One we adore to have joy in our fellowship. We do not need to live joyless lives, but we do need to abide in Christ, relishing His love, offering our obedience in return, and then abounding in the perfect divine joy that He has eternally possessed and that He delights to give to those who abide in Him.

HYMN

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 blessed members,
And all fear of want remove;
Who can faint, when such a river
Ever flows their thirst t' assuage?
Grace which, like the Lord, the giver,
Never fails from age to age.

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

PRAYER

Our heavenly Father, truly all blessings come from you. We thank you that in Jesus Christ you have filled us with blessings: the knowledge of the Lord, peace, the forgiveness of our sins, the transformation of our lives, a taste and indeed desire for the words that come to us from your mouth in the pages of Scripture. We thank you for the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ who has opened our eyes to see our need of Him and His all-sufficiency to be our Saviour here and hereafter. And we thank you for the way in which He has brought us to you so that we come to you as children to their heavenly Father. Lord, as you speak to us, make us conscious of how great your love for us is and so we look to you to lead us and to teach us in the New Year from your word. We pray this in Jesus our Saviour's 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.

MESSAGE

Special thanks to you all for your encouragement and support over 2020. With all the many challenges of this past year we have also seen the kindness and compassion of so many. We continue to pray for God's leading and guidance throughout this New Year and our prayer is that we would all know the Lord's near presence. Our thoughts are especially with families and friends who have lost loved ones in 2020, may the God of all comfort be particularly near to all.

Our thanks to all the volunteers who have distributed this WAH material over the year, to John for editing and printing the sheets and placing it on our website, Heather for managing the Facebook page, and Martin for producing the video services. We are also grateful to all the volunteers who have enabled the church services to go ahead in these difficult times, and for Martin who organises each church service which runs extremely well. Thank you to everyone!

For many, we know that returning to a church service just isn't possible at present, but we hope for better days ahead when we can all worship together again soon. Please be assured that you are all kept in our thoughts and prayers. Whether we are worshipping in the church building or at home, we are comforted to know that we are united by the love of God who meets us where we are. Stay safe, keep well, and may we all know the blessings of God in 2021.

Happy New Year to you all,

Stephen

WORSHIP

Depending on demand there will 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