

5TH SEPTEMBER 2021

FERINTOSH PARISH CHURCH

WORSHIP AT HOME



www.ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

"A sermon without Christ in it is like a loaf of bread without any flour in it. No Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home, and never preach again until you have something worth preaching." (C.H. Spurgeon)

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

*Almighty God,
In Christ we are loved with an everlasting love,
Clothed in eternal righteousness,
Our peace flowing like a river,
Our joy and triumph unutterable,
Our souls lively with the knowledge of salvation,
Our sense of justification unclouded.
All the treasures of a million worlds could not make
us richer, happier, more contented, for Christ's
unsearchable riches are ours.
One moment of communion with Christ, one view
of his grace, is ineffable, inestimable.
But O God, we could not long after your presence
if we did not know the sweetness of it;
And such we could not know except by your Spirit
in our hearts, nor love you at all unless you first
elect us, call us, adopt us, save us.
We give thanks for the covenant of grace,
In Jesus Name we pray, Amen.
(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 JOHN 10: 7 - 18 NKJV

7 Then Jesus said to them again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

8 All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them.

9 I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.

12 But a hireling, he who is not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf catches the sheep and scatters them.

13 The hireling flees because he is a hireling and does not care about the sheep.

14 I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep and am known by My own.

15 As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.

16 And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

17 "Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again.

18 No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father."

SERMON

The Bible frequently uses animals as illustrations to help us understand key points about life. In Proverbs, ants are held up as examples of being industrious (6:6), and a lion is used to describe a king's wrath (19:12; 20:2). David warns us not to be like a horse or a mule in the way we relate to God, and Isaiah assures us that those who wait on the Lord will soar with "wings like eagles" (40:31).

Jesus occasionally used illustrations about animals to make a point in His teaching. If our heavenly Father takes care of the birds of the air (Matt. 6:26) and does not let one of them fall to the ground apart from His will (10:29), then we can be sure that He will take care of His own children.

Before the Lord sent the twelve apostles out to preach the Gospel, He warned them of the opposition and persecution they would face as they ventured out into the world as His ambassadors. To make His point, Jesus again drew analogies from the animal kingdom. In fact, in one sentence, He mentions four different animals. "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (10:16). Our Lord teaches His followers some profound lessons by His choice of animal analogies.

First, we are like sheep. In John 10, Jesus describes Himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for His people, whom He calls His sheep. Sheep are gentle and submissive animals. They are defenceless, which is why they need the protection and provision of a shepherd. The lesson is readily apparent to anyone who understands the Gospel of God's grace. As sinners, we are helpless before God. Our only hope is a saviour, and God has provided Him for us in the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ. Without strength and without recourse, Christians are dependent on Christ as the great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb. 13:20).

The next lesson is not so obvious. Not only are Christians like sheep, but the world is also like a wolf pack. Wolves are predators. They are ravenous and dangerous. They run in packs and work together to gang up on their prey. When a wolf and sheep meet up in the wilderness, the wolf wins every time. So, it is with Christians in the world. In one sense, believers will always be at a disadvantage because we don't play by the same rules. The virtues that our King calls us to cultivate are meekness, gentleness, self-control, kindness, and other sheep-like qualities that no self-respecting wolf would ever desire.

Given the disparity that exists between sheep and wolves, why would people who are compared to the former ever associate with those compared to the latter? Jesus told His disciples that He intentionally sent them to be involved in the lives of unconverted people. He sends His sheep on a mission to wolves. Specifically, we are sent to call wolves to become sheep. Though on the surface this seems like an utterly foolish mission, in reality, it is God's way to accomplish His saving work in the world and to display His wisdom and power in the process. When sheep conquer wolves it is obvious that something supernatural has happened.

Our Lord wants His followers to see themselves as inherently helpless as He sends them into the world of unbelievers to preach the Gospel of His kingdom. Such self-awareness will cause us to trust not in our own resources but in Christ.

Furthermore, this imagery will motivate us to heed our Lord's encouragement to be both wise and innocent as we engage people with the Gospel. He calls us to be like serpents and doves.

In Egyptian hieroglyphics serpents symbolise wisdom. This is fitting since snakes tend to operate with an admirable sort of shrewdness in avoiding danger. By itself, being compared to a snake is no compliment, but Jesus tempers this by introducing a fourth animal. Christian shrewdness must always be governed by a dove-like innocence. We are never free to sin in our efforts to be wise. This kind of guileless prudence is what we see displayed by Paul as he divided the Pharisees against the Sadducees when he stood before the Sanhedrin in Acts 23. We also see it manifested in his evangelistic strategy carried out at the Areopagus in Acts 17.

Our Lord calls His followers to take the Gospel into the world with thoughtful simplicity. We are to go with a keen awareness of our vulnerability, depending on our Shepherd to guide and defend us. As sheep among wolves, with the prudence of a serpent and the integrity and innocence of a dove, we are sent to proclaim the Good News of the kingdom of our God.

HYMN

All things bright and beautiful
All creatures great and small
All things wise and wonderful
'Twas God that made them all

Each little flower that opens
Each little bird that sings
He made their glowing colors
And made their tiny wings

The purple headed mountains
The rivers running by
The sunset and the morning
That brightens up the sky

The cold wind in the winter
The pleasant summer sun
The ripe fruits in the garden
He made them every one

He gave us eyes to see them
And lips that we might tell
How great is the Almighty
Who has made all things well

PRAYER

Our gracious God, we bless you that the heavens are full of your praise and that from the earth there is an answering chorus of worship and adoration. Our desire is that the name of the Lord should be praised throughout the earth, and we pray as we come before your throne and as you show us the power of your Word, that you would direct us afresh to the glory of your Son, that your Spirit would shine brightly upon Him, that He would take what belongs to the Lord Jesus and show it to us and fill us afresh with love for Him, with newfound trust in Him and with humble repentance for our sins. We look to you again and we pray that you would open your hand and supply each of us with what we need and direct us to your glory. This we pray for Jesus Christ our Saviour's sake. 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

Sunday morning worship takes place at 11am in the church. We have reduced social distancing to 1 metre within the church and as a result have been able to increase the number of seats that are available, though there is still an upper limit. We would love to be able to welcome you to the service, so to guarantee a seat, please book with the Session Clerk, Martin McLauchlan, preferably by 5pm on the Friday prior to the service.

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.

The Sunday Zoom service is at 6.30pm. If you would like to join the Zoom-service, please contact the Session Clerk at SessionClerk@ferintoshparishchurch.org.uk

Please continue to take care and stay safe.

HIGHLAND FOODBANK

Please continue to support the work of the foodbank by donating food, toiletries and household cleaning items. Beans, soup and pasta are not required for now due to a large supply. Long life items such as juice and milk are always welcome. Think of how it is to be cooked since sometimes people have limited access to cooking facilities. Sadly items of fresh food are unable to be used. Thank you for your great support each week.