



The Church of Scotland

Weekly Worship
14th February 2021

Taking part in today's service is

Rt Rev Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly, The Church of Scotland

Rev Phil Gunn, Roskeen Church, Alness

Kim Halliday, Lenzie Union Church, Glasgow

Rev Chris Hay, West Kirk, Arbroath

Rev Tim Mineard, St. Andrew's Church, Barrhead

With music from members of Dunblane Cathedral, Ellon Parish Church and Fischy Music

Introduction – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

Hello everybody. I'm tempted to say 'good morning' but then again I know folks will be sharing in the service at different times and so I'll leave it as 'hello!'

I am Martin and I am presently serving as the Moderator of the General Assembly and it's a real privilege to be able to offer these services of worship during lockdown - and more so, to be offering them collaboratively. I guess I could have done them myself easily enough but I am enjoying inviting others to take part.

And so today in this service, you'll meet Kim, one of our youth workers, from Lenzie, and three of our newly-ordained ministers, all of them in their early months in ministry. Gosh it must have been strange for them to be ordained and inducted but not really, since then, having had opportunity to meet their folk. So let's uphold them in prayer. We have Chris from Arbroath, Tim from Barrhead and Phil from Ross-shire.

I'm thankful to all of them for taking part and to our tech team who are making things possible behind the scenes.

So come on, let us go before the Lord our maker. Let us come and worship.

Hymn – Holy, holy, holy! Sung by Dunblane Cathedral Choir

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed trinity!



Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
God ever living through eternity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea.
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed trinity!

Prayer of Approach – Rev Tim Mineard, St. Andrews Church, Barrhead

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full, in his wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace

Lord that is our simple prayer today as we open our worship
That you would help us to turn our eyes upon you once again
That you would help us to look full into your wonderful face
That during this time, however brief, the things of earth would grow strangely dim
And Lord, help us once more to see clearly the light of your glory and your grace

Dear Jesus, We are aware of how heavily we carry the things of this earth
Especially just now
We're so conscious of how much they weigh us down and demand our attention
Of how they seem to be so all consuming from our human perspective
Even now as we take part in this service
Lord we want to lay down the things of this earth
Just as you lead your friends up on to that high mountain
Leaving behind the worries and concerns of the world far below
To see the incredible reality of who you are
So Lord, lift us up from the things of this world
Help us to raise our eyes from our human concerns
And to turn our eyes upon you Jesus

Forgive us for the things we hold on to so tightly
Forgive us that we forget to look to you
Forgive us Lord that we get it so wrong
That **you** so often grow strangely dim in the darkness of our human perspective

Lord take us by the hand once again today
Wherever we are just now
Lead us up to a high place we pray



Help us once again to see you
And help us once again to hear your voice loud and clear
“This is my son, the beloved, listen to him”
Amen.

Scripture Reading – Rev Phil Gunn, Roskeen Church, Alness

Our Bible reading today comes from the Gospel according to Mark, chapter 9, verses 2-9. It's entitled the Transfiguration.

After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

Amen and may God bless these words to our ears this morning.

All Age Talk – Kim Halliday, Lenzie Union Church, Glasgow

Do you know you what is important about the 14th of February? Its Valentine's Day. A day where people tell other how much they love someone. I have a couple of things with me today for us to think about love.

First, I have a Teddy Bear. Sometimes on Valentine's day people give each other gifts or do something to show someone that they love them. It might be giving a teddy, a card, chocolates or doing things like make dinner for someone. Some people may even write a letter to someone they love. Valentine's Day is a special day for this but we should remember to show love all year round.

Then next things I have is a bible. Did you know that God has created a love letter to each one of you watching? The bible is our love letter from God and it shows us how God created each one of us and how much God loves each one of us. God loves us even if we make a bad choice and we might do something that's not that nice. God loves us no matter what. God's love is unconditional.



Next, we have a cross. The cross represents the love that Jesus has for us. The bible says "This is my command: Love one another the way I loved you. This is the very best way to love. Put your life on the line for your friends." which is from John chapter 15 verse 13 (MSG) That is what Jesus did when he died on the cross. He gave his life for you and for me out of love for us. That is why the cross is a symbol of love.

And finally, we have what is probably the most well-known symbol of love, a heart. I want you to think how you can show love to another person this week. This might be doing something nice for a family member, helping out a friend, or maybe even donating to charity or a food bank. Try and do something that shows love like Jesus showed on the cross. We learn from Jesus in John 13 verse 34. "Let me give you a new command: Love one another. In the same way I loved you, you love one another. This is how everyone will recognize that you are my disciples—when they see the love you have for each other." John 13 verse 34 to 35 (MSG)

I'm going to put the heart and a cross somewhere in my house where I can be reminded each day of the love that God has for me. Maybe you can do the same. Draw or create a heart and a cross and put it somewhere you can see it each day and be reminded of how much God loves you.

Let's Pray: God thank you for the amazing love you show us every day through your word. The bible reminds us of your great love every time we pick it up. Help us to be reminded of how much you love us through the sacrifice of your son. Help us to find ways to love other people just like Jesus loved us. Amen

Song – God Beside, Fischy Music

When I wake up in the morning, in my bed
God behind, God beside, God ahead
When I'm eating up my breakfast - bacon and egg
God behind, God beside, God ahead
When I'm going on a summer holiday
God behind, God beside, God ahead
When I'm opening my presents, Christmas day
God behind, God beside, God ahead

In the sunshine (Aaah!)
And the rain (Aw!)
In the laughter (Ha Ha Ha!)
And in the pain (Ouch!)

With us in the morning, with us in the day
With us in the evening, always, always, always, always.....

When it feels like you've been left out ...on your own
God behind, God beside, God ahead



When there are no cards or letters...no-one phones
God behind, God beside, God ahead
When you fall out with your friends...feeling sad
God behind, God beside, God ahead
When somebody in your family...drives you mad
God behind, God beside, God ahead

In the sunshine (Aaah!)
And the rain (Aw!)
In the laughter (Ha Ha Ha!)
And in the pain (Ouch!)

With us in the morning, with us in the day
With us in the evening, always, always, always, always..... (x 2)

Sermon – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

When you think about it, do you imagine God above you, looking down, or beside you, walking with you?

I want to suggest that this isn't an 'either, or' but a 'both, and.' And further, I want to suggest that, as Christians, any time we find ourselves thinking about what God is like - questions like this one - we should start by looking at Jesus.

How so? Because seeing Jesus is seeing God. Knowing Jesus is knowing God. Scripture tells us as much.

John writes that *'no one has ever seen God but that the only Son has made him known.'* Paul affirms as much in writing to the Colossians, declaring that, *'He - that is, Jesus - is the visible likeness of the invisible God.'* And in the opening verses of Hebrews, we read that, *'The Son is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being.'*

Isn't that wonderful!? That Jesus is the exact likeness of God? It means that when we see who this Jesus was, as described in the gospels, we're seeing who God is.

Of course there will always be a sense in which God is shrouded in mystery - *in light inaccessible, hid from our eyes.* In this life our knowledge of God will always be partial; we see as in a mirror, dimly. And yet we're not completely in the dark. God reveals something of God's being and nature and character in Jesus.

So what is it about Jesus that might help us to think about God and whether God is above us, looking down, or with us?



Well as I said, I think it's both. Neither way of thinking about God is wrong but each needs the other to be right; at least if we're concerned to reflect the fulness of the picture.

And my hunch is that that's exactly what Peter, James and John learned from their mountain-top experience in what Phil read for us from Mark's Gospel and which we refer to as the Transfiguration. Jesus had been and was with the disciples, day by day. They walked with him, ate with him, listened to him, asked him questions. And yet in this moment, he was something much more and the glory of the divine blazed from him as a blinding light.

Of course this wasn't the only such occasion. In response to Jesus having calmed the storm, his disciples asked each other, *'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'*

And what must they have thought as he turned water to wine, as he healed those who were sick and cast out demons, and as he fed hungry crowds and even raised back to life those who had died?

They knew him in the everyday and ordinary. And they knew him in the above and beyond, extraordinary - when their earthly, human categories were of no use to them.

So in relation to my original question, they were coming to see that Jesus was like them and yet wholly different from them - that he was with them yet, immeasurably so, above them.

To put that in some kind of theological framework, they were coming to see Jesus as possessing both *'meekness and majesty, manhood and deity.'*

And here, friends, is the truth of it! They knew Jesus as teacher and friend but they were edging towards knowing him as Lord.

God is both transcendent and immanent. Fancy words but simply meaning that God is both near and far, here yet there, with us and beyond us.

No doubt each of us, according perhaps to our Christian schooling or even our temperament, favours one of these ways of seeing God more than the other. Some will focus on God as 'almighty,' 'maker of heaven and earth.' Others will marvel that God is here, with us, close at hand... even, as Joan Osbourne's song, suggests, 'One of us.'

For my own part, I can say I lean in that direction - thinking about Jesus leads me to thinking about God as being near me, with me. I think of God as being my Father. That comes naturally to me. So I need to pay attention so that I don't somehow forget that God is also Holy and that I need to be on my knees before Him.

Actually the Apostle's Creed is helpful in this as it talks about God as 'Father Almighty' - 'Father' pointing to the closeness of God, 'Almighty' indicating God's otherness.

But more importantly, scripture gives us ample evidence of the need to envision God as Mighty - as being above and beyond.

Take this, for example, from the prophet Isaiah:



*'The Lord says, For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways.*

*For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.'*

Or how about this from the letter to the Romans:

*'O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments
and how inscrutable his ways!'*

And of course the Church's hymnody echoes this:

*'Holy, holy, holy!
Though the darkness hide thee
Though the eye of sinful man
Thy glory may not see
Only Thou art holy
There is none beside Thee
Perfect in power, in love and purity*

So friends, the big picture is that God is above us and with us, transcendent and eminent. And the benefits of our faith are lessened, if we pay attention to only the one and not the other.

Right now in the midst of the awfulness of this pandemic and as Elaine and I steer a course through family bereavement. There's great comfort in knowing that God is with us. In God we find strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. Sometimes in our seeking after God. It's good to know that he's kneeling at our feet to comfort us more than just enthroned on high above us. I suppose it's like me being glad that I've been here at home with Elaine at this time. If I'd been away, removed from her, of course we could have spoken on the phone, but it wouldn't have been the same. Sometimes you need to be near. And in God we have that. He promises to be near, as near as the air we breathe. But we know too that God is Almighty and that our God reigns. That God has the whole world in his hands. That God holds all time from beginning to end. And we are convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. That's because God is enthroned on high. Yes that's because God is Almighty, All-powerful, that God has no rival. And yes, that God alone is worthy of our praise and worship. With us and watching over us. We really do have the best of both worlds.

Amen. Thanks be to God.



Prayer of Intercession - Rev Chris Hay, West Kirk, Arbroath

One of the things that has been permitted in all phases of lockdown has been our ability, if able, to go out and exercise; to get some fresh air and to take in our surroundings. We may not be able from our doorsteps to walk up a mountain and enjoy the vistas from the top, but we can appreciate the world around us. Our prayers for intercession today are based on reflections during daily exercise.

Loving God, the opportunity to wander our streets, perhaps visit the local park, a riverside walk or local path network reminds us of the wonder, variety, beauty and fragility of our world – of the delicate balance that allows it to flourish and of the damage that ignorance, carelessness and greed can inflict on it. We pray for our world and for its people – for the parts where there continues to be war and conflict and those who are displaced in the crossfire, forced to live as refugees, alongside strangers in an alien culture. For the parts where a lack of the right amount of rain means persistent food shortages and hunger, the inability to provide for family and the resulting detrimental effect on health and education.

Lord, grant us a glimpse of your glory - fill us with your spirit - refresh us and make us new.

Walking to that park or footpath often means walking past houses, the local shops, the local school or the doctor's surgery, and our local church. We thank you that you have created us to live in community, to share the pleasures of life one with another. Generous God, we pray for those whose experience during the Pandemic is of increased workload, pressure and continual exposure to risk leaving them exhausted and running on empty. For those for whom the opposite is true – unable to continue with their usual work and routine, bringing a sense of boredom and frustration, of worry and lack of self-worth. For those who are alone, for whom this extended lockdown has increased their isolation and reduced their confidence.

Grant us a glimpse of your glory - fill us with your spirit - refresh us and make us new.

As we arrive back to our own street, to our own homes – we remember the people inside the houses around us – our friends, our neighbours, our own families. Healing God, we pray for those known and unknown to us for whom this season brings sadness and suffering. For those whose relationships have broken down, those whose own health – mental and physical has suffered, those who are waiting for hospital referrals or postponed procedures, those who are struggling to come to terms not only with the loss of someone dear but the lack of the physical presence of others who would comfort and support them. In a moment of quiet, we name those known to us before you.

Grant us a glimpse of your glory - fill us with your spirit - refresh us and make us new.

Holy and eternal God, as we offer you our prayers today, by your Spirit enable us to experience your holiness in our lives, a greater delight in your mystery, and a greater joy in seeking your presence. Amen.



Hymn – The Servant King, performed by members of Ellon Parish Church

From heaven you came helpless babe
Entered our world, your glory veiled
Not to be served but to serve
And give Your life that we might live

*This is our God, The Servant King
He calls us now to follow Him
To bring our lives as a daily offering
Of worship to The Servant King*

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load he chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
'Yet not My will but Yours,' He said

Come see His hands and His feet
The scars that speak of sacrifice
Hands that flung stars into space
To cruel nails surrendered

So let us learn how to serve
And in our lives enthrone Him
Each other's needs to prefer
For it is Christ we're serving

Blessing – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

Go now in peace and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the holy spirit be with you all, this day and for ever more.
Amen