



The Church of Scotland

Weekly Worship
21st March 2021

Taking part in today's service:-

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

Rev Amanda Macquarrie, Bo'ness Old Kirk

Ellen Griffiths Weir, Shetland Churches Children & Family worker

Chloe Spencer, Youth Coordinator for Edge & Rock Youth Project, Banchory West

Rev Tony Stephen, Banchory West Church

With music from Banchory West Church musicians & singers, Fischy Music, and the New Scottish Hymns band

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

Well folks,

If Lent is a journey towards Easter, then I think we can say “We’re getting there”. And maybe that just about sums up where we are as church and country as we're working our way through the pandemic.

We’re getting there.

The problem is though we’re not quite sure what “there” is going to be and how is life going to look on the far side of all of this?

Perhaps we need to remember the experience of Israelites making their way through the wilderness towards the promised land, not exactly knowing where they were going. Not exactly knowing what they would find when they got there, and yet God led them by a pillar of cloud through the day and by fire by night.

Friends, let us continue to trust the same God to lead us through all of these present challenges, and with that in mind, let us worship God.

Hymn – ‘King Of Kings’ from Banchory West Parish Church

In the darkness we were waiting
Without hope, without light
'Til from Heaven You came running
There was mercy in Your eyes



To fulfil the law and prophets
To a virgin came the word
From a throne of endless glory
To a cradle in the dirt

Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings

To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the cross
For even in your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake you died

Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings

And the morning that You rose
All of Heaven held its breath
'Til that stone was moved for good
For the Lamb had conquered death
And the dead rose from their tombs
And the angels stood in awe
For the souls of all who'd come
To the Father are restored

And the church of Christ was born
Then the Spirit lit the flame
Now this gospel truth of old
Shall not kneel, shall not faint
By His blood and in His name
In His freedom I am free
For the love of Jesus Christ
Who has resurrected me

Praise the Father, praise the Son
Praise the Spirit, three in one
God of glory, Majesty
Praise forever to the King of Kings rpt

Praise forever to the King of Kings



Prayer of Approach – Rev Amanda Macquarrie, Bo’ness Old Kirk

Let’s come to God in prayer. Let’s pray.

Father God you call us into this time and this space and we come in response to you, hearts ready to sing of our praise and our thanksgiving, moved by all that you do for us to bring you our praise. Father we thank you for the wonder of creation, bursting forth with spring around us. We thank you for buds on trees, for the birdsong just shouting your glory around us as the birds return from where they’ve spent winter.

We thank you for the love of friends and family and the different ways it's shown in these days. We thank you for the text that speaks volumes, for the smile of eyes rather than mouth hidden behind the mask. We thank you for simple pleasures, a walk with a friend or companion, a phone call, a video call, time spent in leisure doing a jigsaw, a moment spent with a child learning a difficult maths problem.

But Father most of all today, we raise our voices in praise and thanksgiving for the love that is shown to us through your Son. Lord that you would take on flesh, that you would come and walk this life of ours, teaching us your rhythms, showing us your ways, inviting us to follow. Inviting us to learn from you what it is to be fully human made in the divine image. Lord, we give you our thanks and our praise.

But Lord so often we get it wrong. You teach us to be selfless, to lay down our lives for others and yet we want to hold our lives tightly to us controlling everything that we do. We push you aside, our will not yours. Forgive us Lord for the times when we get it wrong. Forgive us for the times when we put ourselves first. Forgive us for the times when we don’t see others' need. Forgive us for the times when we cannot forgive ourselves. Lord, may we know that we are forgiven in this moment of confession. May we know that these things we have done are taken from us. May our guilt be gone and instead Lord, in the space left behind, may your love and your forgiveness and your grace well up within us, transforming us and our hearts from the inside out so that our lives might reflect you in all that we say and do.

Teach us to walk in your ways Lord. Enable us to follow where you lead that we might grow more and more in your likeness and learn to dance to your rhythm and follow your steps.

In Jesus’ name.

Amen.

All Age Talk – Ellen Griffiths Weir, Shetland Churches Children & Family worker

Hi, my name’s Ellen, and I live in Shetland, which is a group of islands and is the most northerly point in the UK. There are lots of things I love about living here but one of the things I love is the amazing beaches that we have. Why don’t we go and visit one together today?

Welcome to St Ninians! Let’s get down to the beach!

If I asked you what you see, I wonder what you’d say?

- Sand?
- Waves?
- Sky?
- Grass?

Yes! If you said any of those things, you’d be absolutely right! But is that all that we can see? Why don’t we go and look a little bit more closely?

Actually, if I take the time to stop and notice, then there are all sorts of things that I can see!



- Like the reflection of the sky in the wet sand
- The colours of the waves
- The tracks of a bird
- The shapes we can make from things we find on the beach
- Plastic, which we can pick up and take away home with us
- The pattern the wind makes in the sand
- The shape and colour of the seaweed

And there are things I can sense in other ways:

- The smell of the salty, sea air and
- the feel of the wind on my face
- The texture of the grass
- The shape and smoothness of the pebble

Once, when it was getting very close to when Jesus was going to be arrested and put to death on the cross, some people came to Jesus' friends and asked if they could see Jesus, if they could meet him. I wonder why they wanted to see him? I wonder what they were looking for?

Maybe they had heard about some of the amazing things that Jesus had been saying and doing. Maybe they sensed that there was something special about him and they wanted to see for themselves if everything that people said was true.

But even if they did have an idea about Jesus being special, no-one, not even Jesus' closest friends, had yet fully seen how special Jesus really was. None of them had yet fully understood all that he had come to do - because he hadn't yet died and, more importantly, he hadn't yet come back to life!

When we first came down to the beach, we could have just taken a quick look, noticed the sea, sand sky and thought, "that's beautiful!" But by taking the time to pause and look a bit more closely we discovered all sorts of other beautiful, interesting and important things.

I wonder whether it's helpful to remember that when we think about "seeing Jesus" for ourselves, and by "seeing" Jesus what I mean is getting to know Him and experiencing Him at work in our lives. Sometimes, I wonder if we can maybe think, "Do you know, I've heard that Bible story before," or, "I know that about God." But I think Jesus is always inviting us to look again, to look with fresh eyes, to look more deeply because there are always new things to discover and experience with Him.

There are lots of ways in which can "see" Jesus and get to know Him better – through what we read in the Bible, through people, through the world around us, especially by paying attention to the good things we see or experience.

Jesus invites us to take the time to pause, to look again more deeply at who He is and to share with Him who we are. As we do that, I wonder what new, beautiful, and good things he might have to share with each one of us today?

I'm going to go home now but why don't you stay here for a moment and speak with Jesus and maybe ask Him to help you to see and get to know Him better.



Song – Down to Earth, Fischy Music

He could have been born in a Royal palace,
and called Your majesty;
Wore a crown of diamonds
And lived in luxury
But he was born in a dirty stable
And laid on a bed of hay
Not too many welcomed him
On the very first Christmas Day

He is, down to earth;
he is, down to earth.
The one who changed the world for ever, is down to earth

He could have been friends with rich and famous,
with big celebrities;
had anything he wanted,
living as he pleased;
but he made friends with the poor folks,
with the sick and with the lame.
He helped them with their problems
and he called them all by name.

He is, down to earth,
he is, down to earth
The one who changed the world for ever is down to earth

He could have been full of his importance and felt so very grand
His servants would have bowed and said
Your wish is my command
But he wore a crown of thorns
Gave everything he had
He gave his life that we might know
The great love of his dad

He is, down to earth
He is, down to earth
The one who changed the world for ever is down to earth

He is, down to earth
He is, down to earth
The one who changed the world for ever is down to earth



Scripture Reading – Chloe Spencer, Youth Coordinator for Edge & Rock Youth Project, Banchory

John 12:20- 28

Jesus Predicts His Death

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me.

“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”

Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.”

Sermon – Rev Tony Stephen, Banchory West Church

My son and I like playing, and watching football. We like bringing other people with us as guests. Last time we went we invited some friends at the last minute. There was a bit of an anxious wait to see if we could organise tickets near ours. I had to say - let me go home and see if I can sort it out, and let you know in a few minutes if it can actually happen. There was a tense half an hour or so waiting – but it all worked out and they had a great time.

Imagine for a minute being invited to watch the football match, then being told to wait, and then finding out later that not only were you now going to the game to watch you were going to get to play in the match itself, not just watch. It would be way beyond your expectations

In the first century a group of people known as the Jews were waiting – hoping for a better time. A young Jewish rabbi Jesus called Jesus of Nazareth had been stirring things up, saying and doing things that have escalated to the point where even his own people’s leaders are plotting to get rid him. At one point he is in their capital city, Jerusalem, for a feast called Passover. The writer tells us that there were Greeks among those coming to the festival. Nothing in a Jewish piece of writing is there by accident. These Greeks could not be Jews, so presumably they were fans, fans of the Jewish way, or fans of the Jesus movement. They ask to see Jesus.

Jesus doesn’t answer their request. Bit rude. Instead he starts to talk about hours and about seeds. So they have to wait and listen. What is going on?

Jesus says that the hour has come. Up to now in John’s account (for 12 chapters) Jesus has been saying that this “hour” has not yet come. But now Jesus says, the hour has come – for what? For the Son of Man to be glorified. Son of Man is a name he calls himself. It’s a name that would ring bells in any Jewish listeners imagination because it comes from a book of hope called Daniel, a book of hope, where a “son of man” will come and be part of putting things to rights, of a better time for the Jewish people.

The Jewish people had a fair idea what they thought this should mean. They are crying and groaning under the Roman boot of oppression, and they want this Son of man to sorting things out, to be a King, a warrior leader, with an army of rebels to smash the Romans and set up a new



empire – a Jewish empire. But Jesus doesn't go in for the expected. It turns out their ideas of what they have been hoping for, expecting – have been far too small.

Jesus turns to talk about seeds, that a seed seems to die when planted, it “dies” for the benefit of the crop that will follow.

This story is about death, and sacrifice and self-giving love. The “hour” it seems has come to reject the story of empire, status, power, wealth, fame, popularity, consumption. This is not just their own interests and lifestyle (which the story calls “this life”). This is not about their own selfish survival and interests and pleasures (which is the way the empire around them is selling them). The Jesus story is instead about a bigger plan, God's plan. This plan is not about empire, but about the life they were made for, life in all its fulness, the eternal kind of life, a life of self-giving love. The victory in this story, the freedom. will not be simply over the latest empire, but over far more than that. This is a story of victory over death, over the human addiction to mucking things up, and over all the barriers that get in the way; barriers between God and his people, barriers between his people and each other, and barriers between his people and his creation.

These “Greeks”, gentiles, fans, outsiders, just asked to see Jesus. Does he ignore their request?

It seems to me that what Jesus is saying, and doing, and living out in his life and death and resurrection means that there is good news; that these Greeks, and in fact every outsider gets to join in fully with what God is doing, to be who we were always made to be. Partners in what God is doing.

Like asking simply to watch and finding you were always invited to join in.

Prayer of Intercession - The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

Loving Lord, we thank you for the signs of spring that are now all around us and for the reassurance that you are faithful through every season of life. As we move ever nearer to Easter, we thank you for hope - for the hope of new life and for the hope that, in your strength, we will overcome all the challenges that beset us.

So here us as we pray in particular for those who are struggling right now to find much cause for hope -

those whose mental health has deteriorated throughout the months of the pandemic

those who see no way out of the grinding poverty that beset them and is evident all around them in their communities

those who have been affected by the virus, themselves having been ill or having lost loved ones or not having been able to visit loved ones in care homes, or who are shielding.

Oh Lord, these have been tough times. We've had all kinds of reasons to despair. And yet with you, darkness gives way to light, winter to spring and yes, despair to hope.

So come, we pray, and be close to all those who are just getting by in no more, those who need to know that you are near and that you will never leave us nor forsake us.

Come, Lord, we pray. We pray in Jesus name, Amen.



Hymn – Crown Him With Many Crowns New Scottish Hymns band

Crown Him with many crowns
The Lamb upon the throne
Hark How the heavenly anthems drowns
All music but its own!
Awake, my soul And sing
Of Him Who died for thee
And hail Him as thy matchless King
Thru all eternity

Crown Him with many crowns
Crown Him with many crowns
Crown Him the Lord of heaven
One with the Father known
One with the Spirit thru him given
From yonder glorious throne
To Thee be endless praise
For thou has died for me
Be Thou, O Lord, thru endless days
Adored and magnified

Adored and magnified
Crown Him with many crowns

His glories now we sing
Who died and rose on high
Who died eternal life to bring
And lives that death may die
Crown Him with many crowns
Crown Him with many crowns
Crown Him with many crowns
Crown Him with many crowns
Crown Him with many crowns
Crown Him with many crowns

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

Friends, thank you for joining us today in worship. I hope you are blessed by the experience and hope you feel you have been together with others across the country even though in the isolation of your own home. Let me thank all of those who contributed today and all of those who technically speaking put the service together. We're very grateful to them all. Have a good week. And now, go in peace and may the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you all and remain with you today and for evermore.

Amen.