



The Church of Scotland

Weekly Worship
7th February 2021

Taking part in today's service is

Rev Teri Peterson, St John's, Gourrock
Fraser Reid, St John's, Gourrock
Claire Herbert DCS, Lodging House Mission, Glasgow

With music from members Troon Old Parish Church, St Nicholas Parish Church and Resound Worship

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

Hi everybody I'm recording this introduction and call to worship a week ahead of the service and so I've just read on websites that certain church leaders from across the country have launched legal action against the Scottish Government concerning the closure of our buildings.

I want to say loudly and clearly that the Church of Scotland's official position is that we are more than comfortable to work with the government and understand that our buildings are closed temporarily for the safety and well-being of all of our people and our wider communities.

So, I'm distraught and disappointed that others have taken a different tack.

Look, there's no one in Scotland who wishes more that he could be worshipping in our buildings with my brothers and sisters that's me, but I absolutely understand why that's not possible right now and I support it absolutely what we're doing at the moment.

There is Covid in care homes in my community. There is Covid in hospital wards in my community. Folks are suffering with Covid here. Folks in my congregation have Covid.

It's here and we must do everything we can to suppress it.

To keep ourselves and others safe. So, closing our churches right now for public worship is absolutely the right thing to do.

We can continue to worship individually and corporately digitally as we're doing right now.

So please folks bear with us.

We are getting there. We will get there.

For now, let us continue trusting God and doing that as we worship this day.

I want to find all of those who have contributed parts for today's service and as always, the tech team behind the scenes who make it all possible so together let us worship God.



Hymn – O for a thousand tongues, to sing - performed by members of Troon Old Parish Church

O for a thousand tongues, to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

He speaks, and, listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive,
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.

Hear him, ye deaf; his praise, ye dumb,
your loosened tongues employ;
ye blind, behold your Saviour come;
and leap, ye lame, for joy!

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

Almighty and Everlasting God, you are beginning and end. Alpha and omega, yesterday, today, and forever. You are constant, trustworthy, reliable, enduring. You cause the tides to ebb and flow, the sun to rise and set, the seasons to turn all in perfect order.

And so help us to trust in you even through these uncertain times when we can't be sure about what tomorrow will bring. We know this, you have tomorrow in your hands.

Yes Lord, you are forever while we are frail. Forgive us then that, as Peter stepping out of the boat, we have allowed your gaze to fall from your face and to become so caught up in the wind and the waves. When all the while you promised perfect peace. Even in these days then, help us to live as those who know your peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scripture Reading – Fraser Reidm St John's, Gourrock

Today's reading is from the gospel according to Mark, chapter 1, verses 29 - 39. It was the Sabbath and Jesus had been teaching in the synagogue, and while he was there, he healed a man who had an unclean spirit. We pick up the story at the end of the sabbath day service. I am reading from the New Revised Standard Version.

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them. That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.



In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, 'Everyone is searching for you.' He answered, 'Let us go on to the neighbouring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.' And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

For the word of God in Scripture, for the word of God among us, form the word of God within us. Thanks be to God.

All Age Talk – The Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, Moderator of the General Assembly

I wonder if you're good at getting up early in the morning. Some days I am, some days I like to lie in my bed, under the covers and keep cosy. Well the Bible tells us that Jesus got up early in the morning and he went off all by himself and he prayed. He prayed to His father. Now there was one morning when I guess no one knew that he had gone and when all his friends got up they discovered Jesus wasn't there and the Bible tells us that Simon, one of his closest friends, and the others, they were searching for him, hunting for him everywhere. I wonder if it was like a game of hide and seek? Have you ever had to go looking for someone when they were hiding? Maybe you found them in the cupboard or hiding under the bed. Well Jesus wasn't hiding but they were still searching for him. He was out by himself, praying and then they found him and his friends said 'Jesus, where have you been? We've been looking everywhere for you'. And they told him 'Not only us, but everybody has been looking for you.' Why do you think they were all looking for Jesus? I've got an idea. I think it's because he was so special and people knew that and they just wanted to be with him. He said such wonderful things. Told them all about God. They wanted to hear. They didn't want to miss anything that he said. And he did such wonderful things too. He helped people and he healed people when they were sick. So when Jesus wasn't around everybody was saying 'Where is He? Where is He?'. It was like they didn't want to miss anything he was saying or doing.

I wonder if you're like that. Are you so keen for Jesus that you want to hear him, find out what he's doing? Well, make it the most important thing in your life to always be looking for Jesus. The good news is, is that Jesus isn't hiding. He's not playing a game of hide and seek. The Bible tells us when we look for Jesus we will find him. He is there for us and he wants that.

Let me tell you one other thing before I finish. Yes, we're searching for Jesus, we want to find him and be close to him but he is looking for us. Jesus tells another wonderful story about a shepherd. And the shepherd has got 100 sheep. That's loads isn't it. One day he counts them and one of the sheep is missing. Now, I wonder if that was you or me, maybe we would say 'Hmm, let me think, if I had 100 and I lost one. Well I've still got 99 so that's plenty isn't it. Jesus wasn't like that. He tells the story and the shepherd counts, finds there's one missing and he goes and looks for that one sheep. He doesn't like to think of the idea of that one sheep being lost, of that sheep being all alone, so the shepherd goes and finds the sheep and when he finds the sheep he is so happy.

That's a story that tells us about Jesus. He doesn't want to think of any of us as not being there, lost. So He comes looking for us. Isn't it good to know that Jesus loves us so much that he will come looking for us and why? Because he wants us to be his friends. He wants to tell us how much He loves us. He wants to show us how much He loves us. He wants to put a big loving arm, cuddle, around us. Yes, he loves us that much. So, like Peter and his friends, let's always be looking for Jesus to make sure we're close to him. And let's remember that he is looking for us because he loves us so much.



Hymn – Brother, sister, let me serve you – Recorded as part of a service at St Nicholas Parish Church, Lanark

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you,
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too.

Sermon – Rev Teri Peterson, St John's, Gourock

Hello friends, I'm Teri Peterson, minister of St. John's in Gourock, and I am so grateful to the Moderator for the invitation to be here, and to you for joining me as we encounter God's living word together today.

I'd like to start by asking you to imagine a scene — one that may feel strange just now, as it's something we haven't been able to do in nearly a year, but try to picture it: people spilling out of a building — a church, a theatre, a comedy club, a concert — out into the street, milling around talking to each other about what they saw and what they heard inside. The group eventually disperses as they head to different places to continue their conversations with friends, at the pub, on the bus, walking home.

That sabbath day the people spilled out of the synagogue into the streets of Capernaum with more than enough to talk about for the rest of the day, the rest of the week. They had seen something amazing!



Simon and Andrew headed home, with their business partners James and John, like they always did, going for their traditional Saturday lunch, and they were lucky enough to be first to invite the guest preacher round for a roast. Imagine them talking about all they had seen and heard that morning, chatting away as they walked home, and everyone else in town doing the same, though looking enviously after them, wishing they had been able to invite Jesus themselves.

Once in the house, things took a bit of a turn. It's hard to have a roast ready when the matriarch of the family is ill. This moment in the gospel is the only time we get a glimpse of the disciples' private family lives — Simon Peter must have been married, in order to have a mother-in-law, though we never hear anything about his wife or any children. His mother-in-law might have been a widow, she was living with Peter and Andrew and there's no father-in-law mentioned. In any case, many of us have experienced what it's like to be unwell and need to stay separate from the rest of the household, and we know especially now, that one of the major difficulties with illness is how isolated we feel. When Peter took Jesus in to see her, Jesus did the very thing she likely longed for, and that we are constantly being told not to do just now — he reached out and touched her hand! What it actually says is that he raised her up — and she began to serve them.

He raised her up — words we have heard before. The psalmist says “you raised me up from the miry pit.” Isaiah says “you raise me up on wings like eagles.” And, of course, at the end of the gospel the angels tell the women at the empty tomb, “Jesus is not here, he has been raised.” He raised her up, and she began to serve.

Now I used to think “great, she was just desperately ill a few minutes ago, and now she has to make the dinner? Can't these young men do anything for themselves?” But actually, it doesn't say she just got up and cooked for them, it says she *ministered* to them. It's the same word that describes how the angels ministered to Jesus in the wilderness during his forty days of fasting, and the word for how women provided for and enabled Jesus' ministry, and it's the word for Jesus' famous teaching “the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.” And that word is *deacon*. So Jesus raised her up, and she began to deacon — to minister through service. Peter's mother-in-law is the first human in the gospel to respond to him in this way — to recognise that her raising was for a purpose larger than herself. She was restored to health, and to her rightful place as matriarch, but also to her God-given calling to be one who acts like Jesus, who came to serve. Having encountered his powerful grace, she turned around and shared it with others — something her son-in-law and his eleven fellows never quite figured out, as they continually misunderstood and argued about who was the best and tried to get Jesus to fit their mould of a Messiah, rather than being themselves moulded in his image. This is not to say only those with the title “deacon” are called to minister in this way, but rather that like Peter's mother-in-law, deacons model for all of us what a faithful response to Jesus looks like in tangible, practical service. The mother-in-law acts like angels, and like Jesus, when she is raised up to serve.

Not a moment too soon, either, because the instant the sun set, marking the end of the Sabbath, all those people who wished they could have had Jesus round for tea flocked to the front door — people who were curious, people who had sick loved ones, people who were being harassed by demonic voices, people who were ill.

Now I want to talk for a minute about one of the most difficult things that we modern people read in the gospels and that's about people possessed by demons. Sometimes we know that was a pre-scientific explanation for certain illnesses. But it's clear that people in biblical times did not believe all illness to be caused by demons, and they also didn't believe that all demon possession resulted in illness. Sometimes



like in this case, they use a word that could be translated “demonised” — in a similar sense of terrorised, like being harassed by demons.

And that is something I think we still know about today.

Sometimes those voices that harass are meant to make people feel like outsiders, like they are “other”, a “them” against our “us.” Those voices swirl about in our public discourse and our private conversations, sometimes purposefully and sometimes unintentionally making people feel they are less-than, unwanted, not good enough, different in a bad way.

And sometimes those voices worm their way in to our minds and hearts, and we start to believe them. And that starts to change us and how we talk about ourselves and about others, to change how we behave, to change how we feel. And pretty soon we don’t need anyone else to tell us how unloveable or dangerous or what a failure we are, because we’re telling ourselves...and then turning those same words on anyone else who is even more different, that we can make out to be below us.

When we are possessed by these demons, it can be hard to see that anything is wrong, it’s just the way things are, and we don’t understand why people want to be “politically correct,” or inclusive, or work for justice that would level the playing field for all.

Yet the gospel says that when Jesus encountered such demons, he would not allow them to speak, because they recognised him. They still recognised Truth, with a capital T, and it scared them. These demons do not want to be confronted with truth, because they know it will be their end. So they do everything they can to avoid it and to discredit the truth...but Jesus didn’t listen or make room for both sides, he cast them out and forced them into silence.

I wonder if being freed from those voices felt like being raised up. Like a weight had been lifted, a curtain opened, a breath of fresh air sweeping in. And what it might feel like now, for those demons to be confronted and silenced by the Truth that God is love, and all people are made in God’s image and beloved and called. Would it feel like such a raising up that we would immediately turn that lightness toward service? Toward ministering to others, and helping them encounter the Truth, and so spreading the good news?

Jesus says that he needs to go proclaim the message in other towns, because that is what he came out to do...and then proclaiming the message is always paired with casting out demons. Speaking the truth of God’s love always results in the silencing of those lying voices that tell us some people are less.

Imagine, if you will, another scene. Imagine the Body of Christ, speaking the truth of grace, love, and justice...Imagine the body of Christ embodying the truth of God’s desire for wholeness that leads to service...Imagine the body of Christ insisting on truth that silences falsehoods of othering and marginalisation and me-first...imagine proclaiming the message of God’s abundant life for all, and what power and truth that might have in this world.

As Walt Disney said, “if you can dream it, you can do it.” As the Spirit opens our eyes to see this vision, Christ takes us by the hand and raises us up...and we are to respond in gratitude, by ministering to the world that God so loves, with truth.

May it be so. Amen.



Prayer of Intercession - Claire Herbert DCS, Lodging House Mission, Glasgow

While it was still very dark,
Jesus got up and went out to a deserted place,
and there he prayed
Let us pray,
Abba Father,
Life giver and restorer,
We bring our prayers for others,
The multitude who gather at the door
Whose needs threatens to overwhelm.
For scripture teaches
that in the house of Simon
Jesus reached out a hand
And raised up another to serve.

Today we lift up,
Those who offer care and nurse the sick,
Those whose bodies are in the grip of disease
Those who have not long to live.
Those who are grieving today.
For that is why you came,
To proclaim the message.

We rise up and serve,
Home makers,
Care givers,
Kinship carers
Step families, blended families
Foster families, adoptive families.
Broken and divided Families.
For that is why you came,
To proclaim the message.
We rise up and serve,
Those living far from home.
Those who fear abuse & coercive control in their home
Those with no home to call their own.
Those who experience social exclusion and marginalisation,
Those who feel invisible, unwanted and without advantage in life.
Those who sleep rough or are sofa surfing.
Because that is why you came,
To proclaim the message.

We rise up and serve,
Those who cannot return to their birth place,
And have no land to call their own,
Who cannot walk freely,



Who flee persecution, or conflict
Who are destitute or undocumented.
For that is why you came,
To proclaim the message.

We rise up and serve,
Those whose demons trouble them,
Those caught up in addiction or substance misuse,
Those whose mental ill health torments or frays the edges of reality
Those for whom anxiety, fear or trauma continue to haunt their daily walk
For that is why you came,
To proclaim the message.
So that we might rise up and serve,
Those who sell or exchange sex.
Those trafficked for sex
Those who find themselves trapped in modern slavery.
Those who are being controlled by others and whose labour is forced from them.
That is why you came,
To proclaim the message.

And we continue to rise up and serve ,
Those who hunger and thirst,
Those who hunt for you.
Those who find themselves in need of food banks,
Emergency parcels and meal vouchers.
Whose budget no longer meets their needs.
Who cannot provide for their families.
For that is why you came,
To proclaim the message.

We rise up and serve,
Those who experience the worst kind of poverty,
The poverty of love.
Whose adverse childhood experiences render them;
Unloved, unlovable, and often invisible.
That is why you came,
To proclaim to them the message.

You raised up a band of believers -
Commissioned to follow you in serving.
They need you to be more than a healer
That is why you came,
To proclaim the message.
In words and service,
To the cross and beyond.



Through your presence,
the Kingdom of God draws near.
Hear these our cries
And help your church to serve you better,
That is why you came
To proclaim the message.
Amen.

Song – Send Us Out , Matt Osgood, Resound Worship

Send us out in the power of your Spirit,
to shine your light in the way we live.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit,
as we've received, may we freely give.

Send us out,
send us out,
send us out for your glory.
Let all we do
be praise to you;
send us out for your glory

Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to show your love everywhere we go.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit,
Lord, fill us up so we overflow.

Send us out,
send us out,
send us out for your glory.
Let all we do
be praise to you;
send us out for your glory

We're laying down our lives,
a living sacrifice,
we're living for your glory and your praise.
We're taking up our cross,
we've counted up the cost,
we're living for your glory and your praise.

Send us out,
send us out,
send us out for your glory.
Let all we do



be praise to you;
send us out for your glory

Send us out,
send us out,
send us out for your glory.
Let all we do
be praise to you;
send us out for your glory

send us out for your glory

send us out for your glory

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

Go now in Peace. Stay safe.
And may the blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you, and those you love
today and forevermore
Amen