



St Columba's Bathgate and St Peter's Linlithgow



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*30th August 2020
John the Baptist*

Dear friends, as the daylight hours shorten we continue to adapt to a new normal, which is challenging. I hope that the readings and the prayers help us feel connected with other Christians and remind us of God's presence in all situations for all time. This Sunday we mark the Beheading of John the Baptist and below are the readings, the collect for the day, a very short reflection, prayers and a blessing.

Readings: 2 Chronicles 24: 17 – 21;
Hebrews 11: 32 – 40; Mark 6: 17 – 29

Collect

God, who called Saint John the Baptist to be both in birth and death the forerunner of your Son: grant that, as he was slain for truth and justice, so we may boldly resist corruption and vice, and receive with him the unfading crown of glory; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Reflection:

John the Baptist is the only person apart from Jesus to be commemorated more than once during the church year and marking this particular occasion seems odd, for how do we make sense of a passage that has no redeeming features? We have a ruler – Herod who had abandoned his first wife to marry Herodias, the wife of his brother Herod Philip. So he marries his sister-in-law. It gets worse, because Herodias' father was one of Herod's half-brothers, so Herod married a woman who was also his niece.

And there's more. Because of the very complicated familial and marital entanglements Salome was simultaneously Herod's niece and great-niece.

So is it any surprise that John the Baptist, never one to curry favour, had spoken truth to power? His target was the marriage of Herod and Herodias, which directly broke the Jewish law on marriage as laid out in Leviticus both in chapter 18 and chapter 20.

Herodias is furious, Herod, although intrigued by John, locks him up until the fateful day when he throws a birthday banquet, gets drunk to the extent that he promises Salome up to half his kingdom, something he was in no position to honour, and Herodias seizes her chance to demand John's head. Herod, too frightened to lose face in front of the very people he needed to keep him in power, caves in.

There's not much to like about that story is there? But change the details and we can see the underlying truths echoed everywhere in our modern world. Power before principles, the persecution of people who prefer principles to power, the fast and loose attitude to morality in its broadest sense.

And John died for what? His death accomplished nothing. He did nothing wrong and yet he suffered anyway. We've all heard Christians try to apply redemption to tragedy. Nothing happens unless God wants it to, God never gives anyone more than they can bear, God has a plan and so on and so on.

Maybe some people want to find redemption and hope because they find it really hard to sit with darkness and trust that God is in the darkness too.



So maybe what this story of unrelenting darkness tells us is that Christianity isn't transactional, that belief in God and right living doesn't protect us from suffering and pain. The reality is some things are too hard to be dealt with by words, because they can only offer false comfort. John the Baptist's death was one of those times for Jesus. What did Jesus do?

He withdrew, he sought silence and solitude, he gave himself space to grieve, to mourn – and then he fed 5,000 people. He offered them a banquet of life, as opposed to Herod's banquet of death.

The passages from Mark and from Hebrews challenge us

to face up to one of the greatest problems that Christianity faces. Why do bad things happen to good people? I have just mentioned some Old Testament heroes of the faith, but we all know good people to whom bad things have happened.

What we can't run away from is the existence of evil. People don't like to talk about evil, it makes us uncomfortable. But it is a reality. That is why Jesus had to go the Cross - to ensure that evil does not and will not have the last word.

What John the Baptist, the characters in Hebrews, Christian martyrs have in common is that they believed that God was intent on restoring the world he created to what he originally intended. But right up to John the Baptist, they never lived to see Jesus come into His kingdom. By contrast we have, and we shouldn't take that privilege lightly.

The challenge for us is show that we are worthy of their faith, that we are willing to put ourselves at risk of persecution by standing up for what is right, by refusing to tolerate injustice, by speaking truth to power by whatever means are available to us

Thanks to Jesus, we have positive power, the power of grace and mercy, the power to love our neighbours as ourselves. It's that kind of power, not the power of evil, not the power of politics or business or military power, that will ultimately save the world.

Prayers

Lord God, we bring you our praise and thanksgiving for all your blessings. Give us the courage that John the Baptist had to call out injustice and the abuse of power and not to avert our eyes and walk the other way. May we show the grace and mercy to others that was not shown to John the Baptist. Help us to live with the mystery and sadness that bad things do happen to good people, especially in these difficult times
We pray for our church leaders, especially Mark our Primus and John our Bishop. For the churches in the communities where we live and serve and for our church families of St Columba's and St Peter's.

We ask your blessing upon our families, friends and neighbours and we hold up to you those connected with our church families who have asked for our prayers: from St Columba's: Geoffrey Gerrard, Kath Stutt, Iain Swanney, Cllr Harry Cartmill, Rev Duncan and Marjorie Shaw, Doug and Pat Laurie, Young Harry, Paul Moffat, Anthea and Katie McAlpin and Elma Webster. And from St Peter's: Peter McOwen, Annie Gibbs (Olivia Moss's future mother in law), Anna Pink, Joe Lavery, Ronnie Adams, Chris Belton and Bob Philip (Jude and Andy's parents) Dot Pringle, Brenda Cook, Harry and Connie Payne, Father John, Ruthie Cadell, David Szkudlarek, Jan Robson, Marion McRae and Neil and Rita Manion (David's parents). And for all their families. For all who have died in recent days and those who

mourn. And we remember those connected with our church families whose anniversary of death falls this week: from St Columba's: Hannah McKenna, Edmund Aitken, Irene Bailey, Ian Irvine, Ricky Bailey and William Kirkland. From St Peter's: Mary Quinn, Aidan Michael Philip and Margaret Nelson.

Blessing

God give you grace to follow his saints in faith and hope and love; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.

Dear Friends,

I am pleased to report that our Sunday and weekday services are going well, people feel comfortable even if they have to wear masks. Services are shorter so that people don't become too uncomfortable. St Peter's 9.30 service is now Zoomed live, and while that worked for some last week a number of people experienced difficulties with the quality of the sound. Rev Peter and I have made some adjustments that will bring the computer closer to the altar and we hope that this will do the trick. Please do get in touch if you experience problems this week or any week for that matter! Please make sure that your speaker volume is turned up to maximum. For those taking part by Zoom, please note the extra attachment to the notices this week, which is the prayer said just before the Eucharist for those taking Communion spiritually.

Rev Peter's ordination to the priesthood is taking place on Tuesday September 22 at 5.30pm in St Mary's Cathedral in Edinburgh. Because space is very limited, it looks like there will be roughly 10 spaces for St Peter's and 10 for St Columba's. If you would like to attend, would those from St Peter's please let Catherine Fowler know by email at ctfowler15@gmail.com. For those at St Columba's please let Jim Adamson know at jim.adamson@live.com.au. The two vestries have agreed that the names will be drawn by ballot. It is hoped that the service will be live-streamed for those unable to attend.

Services for the coming week:

Sunday morning

St Peter's short said Eucharist @9.30am - **Zoomed live**

St Columba's short said Eucharist @ 11.15am

Tuesday morning

St Peter's will be open from 10 - 12 noon

Short said Eucharist 10.30 - 11am

Private Prayer 11 - 12 noon

Wednesday morning

St Columba's will be open from 10 - 12 noon

Short said Eucharist 10.30 - 11am

Private Prayer 11 - 12 noon

Prayer Room 11.30 - 12 noon

Thursday morning Morning prayer @9am via Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/756114372?pwd=ZXpMWndaY210empVY1daL09paGwZz09>

Meeting ID: 756 114 372 Passcode: 002784

Please note that this service now has a passcode (which is embedded in the link)

A reminder of St Columba's opening arrangements

The church will be maintaining a 2m separation between people (unless they are buddies).

You will be required to:

- Masks must be worn and taken home for disposal
- Hand Sanitise on arrival in the vestibule area
- Give name and contact phone number on entry to the church. (The sidesperson will record it on the computer)
- Follow the sides person's instruction as to where to sit.
- At the end of the service remain seated until instructed to leave via the meeting room.
- Sanitise hand on way out (sanitiser opposite toilet doors by fire alarm).

The accessible toilet will be open but please follow the one way system and follow the instructions for sanitising before and after use.

A reminder of St Peter's opening arrangements

The following simple rules should be followed which will give all who enter the church the confidence that everything is in place to ensure their safety and well-being.

- As we all know we are a small church and have space only for 10 to allow for the necessary 2-meter distancing. To ensure that everyone is given the opportunity to come to worship at least one a month an "opt in or out" option will be offered to the congregation. This will then let us work on a schedule which will be fair to everyone. **Jane Ramsay is the contact person (843176). PLEASE LET HER KNOW BY THURSDAY OF EACH WEEK.**
- A sides person will ensure that all hands are sanitized at the front door before entering the building. Please wait until invited into the church.
- Masks must be worn and taken home for disposal.
- Entering and leaving the building will be by the red doors only.
- You will be led back out of church by our sides person, this will be done from back to front of the church. Please wait to be invited to leave.
- Hands should be sanitized when leaving church.
- Our church has been deep cleaned and undergone a "fogging" process. The fogging will continue to be done every 30 days to ensure the building is as clean and germ free as is possible.
- Toilets and *accessibility arrangements: Level access via the side door is available for those with mobility issues. A wheelchair accessible toilet is available if required and will be sanitised after use.*
- Working together as we have done in the past and will continue to do now as we slowly begin to re-enter a new way of coming to church, we will keep each other and those in our community safe and well until the day comes when we gather together once more in St Peter's as one large and very happy church family.

NB If you have any symptoms (temperature, cough, loss of taste or smell) you should not attend church and you should book a test

And a reminder for St Peter's, that in order to avoid unexpected contacts, for the foreseeable future Jane Ramsay will be keeping a record of requests to enter the church. Please check with her beforehand to ensure that our little church will be empty and virus free before going in. Jane's number is 843176

Pastoral visits - under phase 3 of the easing of lockdown came the possibility of my making pastoral visits again. If you would like me to visit you please do contact me. Ideally it would be best to meet in your garden or at a coffee shop perhaps but under certain circumstances, and if you were willing, I would come to visit you at home.

Lent seems such a long time ago doesn't it! But way back then many people took away tubes of Smarties as part of The Bishop's Lent Appeal for this year. I know that some tubes have been returned in both churches, thank you. If anyone has contributions to make to the two charities that Bishop John has invited us to support this year the appeal closes at the end of August. Please contact me if you would like me to collect your contribution if it isn't possible for you to drop it off at church. A reminder of this year's charities:

The Open Door - an Edinburgh based project that aims to, through friendship and social clubs, reduce isolation and loneliness.

Project Embabazi - a project in SW Uganda to enable development in a number of rural communities

Thank you everyone and please do keep well, keep safe.

Rev Christine

Toilets at St Columba: Following comments regarding access to toilets at St Columba's from this Sunday the disabled toilet will be available. The toilet will be cleaned prior to each service but it will be the responsibility of every user to:

Sanitise hands on entering, wipe seat, lid and flushing handle before and after use with disposable wipe, wipe wash hand basin taps and door handle with disposable wipe and then sanitise hands before departing. Sanitiser solution will be wall mounted by sink, Disposable wipes to be placed in bin, **not flushed down toilet.**

SEC Morning, Evening and Night Prayer Liturgies

Morning, Evening and Night Prayer daily liturgies are available at:

www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices

Rev Christine and Rev Peter will be saying Morning Prayer @ 9am and Evening Prayer @ 6pm each day in their own homes and invite you to join in from yours. On Thursday mornings we will be sharing a virtual service via Zoom. If you would like to join in, the link every week (until September 13) will be <https://zoom.us/j/756114372>

Any queries please contact Rev Peter pw@woodifield.com

For the coming week beginning Sunday 30th August we enter into the week of Pentecost 13.

*If you have a paper version of the big blue Prayer Book, for

Morning Prayer we will be using the form: Week B on p. 32. Follow the psalm set for the day in Set 2. Follow the Benedictus antiphon set for the day.

Evening Prayer we will be using the form: Week B on p. 67

*If you want to do it online by far the easiest way to do it is to click

<https://www.scotland.anglican.org/spirituality/prayer/daily-offices/> which is updated three times a day for Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline

*If you just want to do the readings and collect for each day they are as follows. (The online version of Morning Prayer uses the first two readings and Evening Prayer the third, the Gospel.)

Sunday:	Exodus 12: 21 - 27;	Revelation 3: 14 - 22;	Matthew 4: 23 - 5: 20
Monday:	Job 12: 1 - 6, 13 - 25;	Acts 11: 19 - 30;	John 8: 21 - 30
Tuesday:	Job 12: 1, 13: 3 - 17, 21 - 27;	Acts 12: 1 - 17;	John 8: 31 - 47
Wednesday:	Job 12: 1, 14: 1 - 22;	Acts 12: 18 - 25;	John 8: 47 - 59
Thursday:	Job 16: 16-22, 17: 1, 13-16; -22;	Acts 13: 1 - 12;	John 9: 1 - 17
Friday:	Job 19: 1 - 7, 14 - 27;	Acts 13: 13 - 25;	John 9: 18 - 41
Saturday:	Job 22: 1 - 4: 1 - 9, 21 - 23: 7;	Acts 13: 26 - 43;	John 10: 1 - 18

The Collect applies to both Morning and Evening Prayer each day.

Almighty and merciful God, by whose grace alone your faithful people offer you service and praise: grant that we may hasten without stumbling towards the things that you promise; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

Each day we pray for:

- The world: people, governments and leaders of the countries and specific issues arising in the news. Issues relating to social justice, peace, suffering and creation. And of course at this time for the devastating global covid-19 crisis.
- Our wider church, the SEC, our diocese, individual churches.
- Our community - residents in our area. For those with no faith, we pray for their introduction to the Christian faith, and for those with faith, that their faith may develop further.
- Those known to us who are unwell or in need.
- Our own church communities.



Clergy contact numbers:

Rev Christine - 07964175914; 01334769303

Rev Peter Woodifield - 07747023108

Rector's Wardens contact numbers:

David Graham Service - 07901947345

Jane Ramsay - 07982252666