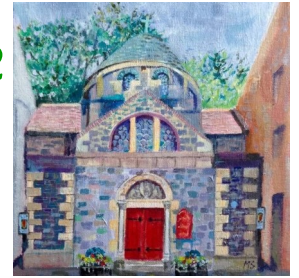




St Columba's Bathgate and St Peter's Linlithgow



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**11th October 2020
Pentecost 19**

Dear friends, as we continue to deal with the challenges of living with Covid 19 I do hope that this Sunday's readings, prayers and short reflection make a connection with your lives.

Readings

O.T.: Isaiah 25: 1 – 9
N.T.: Philippians 4: 1 – 9
Gospel: Matthew 22: 1 – 4

Collect

O Lord, since without you we cannot please you: let the work of your mercy in all things guide our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Reflection

Well, I would much rather be preaching on Luke's version of this parable today, because it is much simpler to understand than Matthew's more bloodthirsty version.

So, what is Matthew trying to tell us? There seem to be two main interpretations, one traditional, and the other more recent and I will let make up your own minds and decide which makes most sense, because I'm not sure there is 'a right answer'.

Traditionally, Matthew's audience would have quickly grasped that the wedding feast referred to the Messianic feast first anticipated 700 years earlier in our Isaiah reading, so the King is God and Jesus is the bridegroom. The King issues invitations to the wedding feast to his chosen people. But they refuse to come. And their refusal was insulting, because it humiliated the king in public and their particular excuses, although not unreasonable in themselves, probably means they never intended coming.

That enrages the king, who burns their city to the ground. What's that all about? Many commentators agree that the reference to the king losing his temper and destroying the city was Matthew's work and not part of the original parable, and was a

reference to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Perhaps Matthew is reminding us that actions have consequences. We like to think that God is love, that everyone is invited to the party. That's true but equally we can forget that there is a day of judgement, that the Bible sets demanding standards of holiness. While God loves us unconditionally, he loves us WHERE we are, but not AS we are. God expects us to change, if we accept his invitation, not to carry on as we are. Grace is not only a gift, but it also makes demands on us.

As for the second set of guests, they know they're not really worthy, but they make an effort and put on their Sunday best. That's why the one guest who didn't make an effort was thrown out – his dirty clothes failed to honour his host. It was his attitude that was the problem.

What about the alternative interpretation? That starts from the presumption that the King's reaction was part and parcel of the parable as told by Jesus. What sort of King is THAT? Sounds more like Herod or Nero, Saddam Hussein or Stalin to me. That's not the sort of God I thought I have been worshiping or even the sort of God I want to worship.

The starting point here is the original Greek, which starts with Jesus talking about a human king... i.e. Matthew is saying that the king is NOT God, so Jesus can't be the bridegroom. This newer interpretation argues that for centuries we have turned the parable into a softer allegory, when it's not meant to be an

allegory at all, precisely because it suits us to do so. The idea that Christians are the people pulled in off the streets is very convenient – for us. It puts us in a position of privilege, we get the reward for obedience while the Jewish people lose their place at the table. Do we really believe that God could be someone who burns a city to the ground because his ego has been offended? Or does Jesus exaggerate so offensively precisely because that's the only way he can get us to recognise how too many of his followers depict God?

So where is Jesus in this story if He is not the bridegroom? Perhaps we should see him as the guest who



refuses to accept the King's hospitality on the King's terms, the one who is bound hand and foot and thrown into outer darkness after refusing to defend himself. Remember, Jesus remained silent before the High Priest and then Pilate at his trial. He's already told his followers three times that he must go to Jerusalem to die.

In Chapter 11 Jesus says that the kingdom of heaven suffers violence. Earthly kingdoms dish out the violence, the heavenly kingdom endures it.

If Jesus is the guest who wouldn't be complicit in all the bad stuff going on, how will we act differently? In this interpretation we see clearly who God isn't and who God is. Surely, we want to embrace the God of love and mercy, the God who is, rather than the god of violence, the God who isn't. But it comes at a price.

I don't know which of those interpretations speaks to you most; whether we change our minds isn't really the point. Just thinking it through will help us gain a better understanding of what the Good News means to us and what it means to be a follower of Jesus. That in itself is totally worthwhile. Amen.

Prayers

Loving and faithful God, help us to open our minds and hearts to your Word and to think afresh what it means to follow you.

In these challenging times, we pray for the fruit of your Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – to be evident in our lives at a time when we are fed up, frustrated, angry and often at the end of our tethers. We pray for our leaders and their advisers to have real wisdom in their decision-making in the coming days, weeks and months. We pray for your Church living out the gospel message of love, forgiveness, justice and hope. Pour your blessing upon all 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. And bless our rector Christine as she recharges her battery on her well-deserved and long-overdue holiday.

We pray for all who are suffering in body, mind or spirit at this hugely challenging time and for those from our church families who have asked for our prayers, particularly Anthea McAlpin who has been in hospital since Tuesday: from St Columba's: Margaret Elder, Geoffrey Gerrard, Kath Stutt, Iain Swanney, Cllr Harry Cartmill, Rev Duncan and Marjorie Shaw, Doug and Pat Laurie, Young Harry, Paul Moffat, Katie McAlpin and Elma Webster. And from St Peter's: Rita Manion (David's mother), Annie Gibbs (Olivia Moss's future mother in law), Barry Greig (Terry's twin brother), 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, and Jan Robson. And for all their families.

We pray for all who have died in recent days and for all who mourn. And we remember those connected with our church families whose anniversary of death falls this week. From St Columba's: Joan Barham (Bishop John's mother), Roger Williams.

And from St Peter's: Robert Hodges, Agnes Miller, Derek Lines, Margaret Harrison, Ivy Baldock, Louise Forsyth, Annie Lindie and Mary Dobson.

Blessing

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his son Jesus Christ our Lord. And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always. Amen.

Notices

Dear Friends, I do hope that you and your families are keeping well and keeping your spirits up. This is perhaps slightly easier than we expected, as the new restrictions are slightly less onerous than originally hinted. Spare a thought for all those places of hospitality, who have been hit so hard again and hopefully they will be able to reopen before too long and we can give them a helping hand to recovery.

Rev Christine will be safely ensconced in The Coachhouse on the Black Isle with Claire Starr by the time you read this, hopefully refreshing herself after pouring herself out for us these past months. Our two wardens – David Graham Service (07901947345) for St Columba's and Jane Ramsay (1506843176) for St Peter's – and I (07747023108) are 'on duty' should the need arise.

While our Harvest Thanksgiving was very different from usual without the usual splendid array of physical gifts, the latest counts suggests that our two churches have raised the magnificent sum of about £400 (including Gift Aid) to give to the Falkirk and West Lothian Foodbanks. That will go a long way to helping those most in need. Well done.

St Peter's has had a very appreciative thank you letter from the Priory Church for our gift of £1,000 for their building project. They felt very encouraged and it's a good reminder that as we receive, so we give.

St Peter's has also received a thank you letter from LYPP for our continued support and prayers over the past few months. It's a reminder of how even in these challenging times there are still plenty of ways to reach out and support worthwhile projects, especially those aimed at people less fortunate than ourselves.

Sunday morning service from St Peter's @ 9.30 being Zoomed live. Those who are joining us from home are asked to ensure that your speaker volume is turned up to maximum; and there is a separate attachment in the notices of a Eucharist prayer that you may like to say as you receive Communion spiritually. **IMPORTANT – PLEASE NOTE.** You now will need a passcode to join the Zoom service (this is due to Zoom's security upgrade). The meeting code is unchanged at 118 321 305. The passcode you need is 670383. Judy Goldfinch will send round the embedded link with the weekly list of Zoom codes.

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 – 11.30

Prayer Room 11.30 – 12 noon

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: · Wear masks and take them home for disposal · Hand Sanitise on arrival in the vestibule area · Give name and contact phone number on entry to the church. (The sides person 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. Tuesday morning and Sunday morning services are now well attended. If you would like to have a place at either of the services, please contact Jane Ramsay who will ensure that the places are fairly distributed each week. Tel 843176 or email her jane.ramsay48@gmail.com. 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. We will continue to "fog" on a quarterly basis as recommended by the cleaning firm who will be professionally cleaning the church on a monthly basis for the foreseeable future. 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 – sadly, the new guidelines mean that pastoral visits to people's homes, including for home communion, are not possible at this time, except in extreme circumstances. Hopefully this restriction won't be for too long. And please remember that I hold you all in my prayers.

Also, at this time we have been advised by the Bishop's Advisory Group that giving lifts to people, out-with your household, to church is not possible either at this time. This is slightly different to the government guidelines which say 'not advised'.

Please do look after yourselves and keep well and safe

Rev Peter

Zoom Coffee and chat once a fortnight on a Monday morning. Next one will be held on 12th October : 11.15 ID 5111791282 password 3i1TYq

Choir with a Mission! Vox Coelestis, conducted by the internationally-renowned Nigel Short, has launched a video to introduce themselves to future audiences as they re-plan their 'Cathedral Series' of performances around Scotland in support of MtSS. Click on the link to go to the MtSS website to see the video - and maybe donate! <http://www.mtss.scot/vox-coelestis-mtss-music-video/>

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 will be <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/756114372?pwd=ZXpMWndaY210empVY1daL09paGlwZz09>

Any queries please contact Rev Peter pw@woodifield.com

For the coming week beginning Sunday 11th October we enter into the week of Pentecost 19.



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

Morning Prayer we will be using the form: Week D on p. 38. 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 D on p. 73

*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:	Joshua 5: 13 – 6: 20;	1 Corinthians 4: 9 – 16;	Matthew 11: 20 – 30
Monday:	Micah 7: 1 – 7;	Acts 26: 1 – 23;	Luke 8: 26 – 39
Tuesday:	Jonah 1: 1 – 17a;	Acts 26: 24 – 27: 8;	Luke 8: 40 – 56
Wednesday:	Jonah 1: 17 – 2: 10;	Acts 27: 9 – 26;	Luke 9: 1 – 17
Thursday:	Jonah 3: 1 – 4: 11;	Acts 27: 27 – 44;	Luke 9: 18 – 27
Friday:	Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) 1: 1 – 10, 18 – 27: 5;	Acts 28: 21 – 16: 12;	Luke 9: 28 – 36
Saturday:	Ecclesiasticus 3: 17 – 31;	Acts 28: 17 – 31;	Luke 9: 37 – 50

The Collect applies to both Morning and Evening Prayer each day

O Lord, since without you we cannot please you: let the work of your mercy in all things guide our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

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 Woodfield – 07747023108

Rector's Wardens contact numbers:

David Graham Service – 07901947345
Jane Ramsay - 07982252666