



for Sunday 27 September 2020

Dear friends

Welcome to another Sunday service. I hope you are all managing through these uncertain days. I'm sure you will join me in thanking George for keeping us going, keeping us connected to one another and day by day reminding us all of God's presence in our lives.

I have so missed seeing you all and I am delighted to be sharing with you today, whether by the worship in Naseby, on the screen in the evening, or as you read the Reflections in the comfort of your own home. Welcome.

As George mentioned last week, I am indeed now a student again, albeit a virtual one. All of my lectures are online, which as you can imagine has its own set of challenges. However, on the plus side, I can sit in my PJ's with my coffee and over Zoom imagine myself walking around the beautiful Glasgow University Trinity College, soaking up the knowledge and ambience.

I will be on Zoom this evening to lead us in our online worship, so even if you are at the Kirk, or reading the Reflections, why don't you switch on at 7pm: be good to see you.

For now, until we meet again, take care, keep looking up and God Bless you.

Julie

Pentecost 18A Sunday 27 September 20 (Proper 21)

Our Reflection today is based on Exodus 16: 2-15, I am aware this is one of our lectionary readings from last week. Thus, for those who like to follow all the lectionary readings for the Sunday and dip into the Old Testament and Epistles, the readings for this Sunday are:

Exodus 17: 1-17; Ezekiel 18: 1-4, 25-32; Psalm 78: 1-4, 12-16; Psalm 25: 1-9; Philippians 2: 1-13; Matthew 21: 23-32.

Although, our Sunday reflection will be based on Exodus 16: 2-15, please read and ponder the suggested Scripture and see how it connects and what it says to you.

.... read, reflect, rejoice...

CALL

Be still and know that I am God

Be still and know that I am

Be still and know

Be still

INTROIT

Lord for the years your love has kept and guided,
urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided,
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord for ourselves, in living power remake us,
self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,
past put behind us, for the future take us,
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone. (CH4 159)

DH Lawrence – PIANO

Softly in the dusk, a woman is singing to me,
Taking me back down the vista of years till I see
A child sitting under the piano, in the boom of the tingling strings
And pressing the small, poised feet of a mother who smiles as she sings

In spite of myself, the insidious mastery of song
Betrays me back, till the heart of me weeps to belong
To the old Sunday evenings at home, with winter outside
And hymns in the cosy parlour, the tinkling piano our guide

So now it is vain for the singer to burst into Clamour
With the great black piano appassionato. The glamour.
Of childish days is upon me, my manhood is cast
Down in the flood of remembrance, I weep like a child for the past.

PRAYER

Lord for the years your love has kept and guided, urged and inspired, cheered
us on our way, Lord for the years we bring our thanks today.

Loving God, we remember the years, we count our blessings, name them one by
one, and as we remember all you have done and all you are doing in our lives, it
takes our breath away.

You call us to remember, Jesus said, do this in remembrance of me. In our life
of faith acts of remembrance transform us, drive us, inspire us to a more faithful
future, hopeful of what lies ahead.

Today we remember that you, Almighty God, remain present among us, that
nothing can separate us from your love, that whatever we face you will always
be faithful to your promises.

And yet, in our remembering we so often forget, in our remembering we go
somewhere only we know. Sometimes our memory is our worst enemy.
If only, two simple words Father, but they have such power over our life. If only
tricks us into thinking that we could be living another life. If only, If only.
Lord forgive us when we hold onto what we know, oh how we like the status
quo even when it's not as great as we remember because status quo is often
better than the unknown.

If only we could look forward in faith and trust all time is in your hands.
Lord for ourselves, in living power remake us, past put behind us, for the future
take us. Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

Together we remember the words that Jesus taught us, saying,
Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,
Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors
For thine be the kingdom, the power and the glory,
forever.
Amen.



SCRIPTURE READINGS

And now we turn to Scripture from Exodus 16: 2-15

Let us listen, read and hear the Word of God ...
... this is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to Him.

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Eternal God, thank you that as you have spoken in the past,
so continue to speak today,
that though your word is old, it is ever new.
God of past, present and future,
teach us that we must listen if we would catch your voice
and look if we would glimpse your presence.
Open our eyes to see, our ears to hear,
our minds to understand and our hearts to respond.

REFLECTION

This week, whilst driving to collect Benjamin from nursery, in light of my reflection today, what I call a holy nugget came on the radio.

I'm dreaming of a White Christmas.

After my initial, you've got to be kidding me, it's 3 months away! I listened and, bizarrely, at the end of what was a warm September Thursday, I pulled up at the nursery, put on my facemask, stood in line 2 metres apart at the gate and somehow it felt reassuring to have heard that song.

I'm dreaming of a White Christmas, just like the ones I used to know.

When a memory hits us, a song, photo, place, taste, smell, it takes us right back in an instant. Memories can help us cope, cope with anxiety, uncertainty, loss. Can make us feel emotion, happy, sad, loved. Remind us of our identity, our story, our strength.

During lockdown, Channel 124 became a favourite in our house, UKTV Gold.

Only Fools and Horses and The Two Ronnies becoming a nightly fixture. Remember the four candles sketch?! Remember Del Boy falling through the bar?!



But my secret favourite was The Golden Girls. Who remembers Dorothy, Blanche, Rose and Sophia?

Even just hearing the theme song makes me smile and do what will surely be in the future my embarrassing mum dance.

I remember an episode when Dorothy was listening to her mum Sophia reminisce over stories of her late husband: the good old days. Dorothy says, "Ma, next time you have an urge to go down memory lane, do me a favour and go yourself."

It's good to remember.

Memories will sustain us, but Nostalgia may choke us.

The Israelites are struggling with nostalgia. The people have been travelling for a while, longer than they expected, finding themselves in a place that's unfamiliar and difficult.

If only God had killed us back in Egypt. Back then we had all the meat we wanted to eat and bread until we were stuffed. If only...

The Israelites long to be back in the good old days.

What drives them?

Hunger, yes, but also fear about the unknown, fear about how they're going to be fed and lack of trust in Moses and Aaron but more importantly lack of trust in God.

So, their memories turn back to something familiar, remembering a past that was different from reality.

A man goes into the GP and says, "Doctor I don't feel well." What are your symptoms? "I'm tired, irritable, headaches, got no appetite.....you know I remember a time when life was simpler. Us kids would go out playing all day and just come home for tea, which wouldn't be any of this fancy stuff, mince n' tatties, fried egg and chips would be on the menu. We had a couple of channels on the TV to choose from, none of this Netflix, Apple TV, and Sky, People talked face to face, no mobiles, no texting, no internet. We went to Rothesay on holiday and it was enough, no angst we have just now because we can't go abroad easily. Huh, they were good old days."

The GP nodded knowingly, and the man continued. Then the Doctor said, "I have listened to your symptoms and I have a diagnosis. You are suffering from a rare form of nostalgia."

Did you know that back in the 17th century nostalgia was indeed classed as an illness, "immigrant psychosis". It was a Swiss Dr Johannes Hofer who coined the word Nostalgia, from the Greek words *nosta* meaning longing and *algos* meaning pain.

The nostalgia that I am talking about today is the ache that arises from lost connection.

Oh, how I miss my red Hyundai Accent, what a car, we journeyed far together, cost me 600 quid and lasted a decade. Never mind the fact that it had a dent in the back bumper where the brakes had given way and it rolled out onto the road and hit a wall, or that it rattled so loud that the interior noise was deafening, or even the fact that the exhaust blew up on the M80 on the way to my first date with Ross. No, my Big Red Car was flawless.

Driving that car, they were the good old days, not a care in the world.....really?

Nostalgia, it's like a grammar lesson, you find the present tense but the past perfect!

Listening to the tune of Israelites melancholic grumblings, God must've been thinking, wait a minute!

Do you remember you were slaves in Egypt?

You cried out for 400 years to be freed from the oppression. Don't you remember?

God's response is amazing! We might expect God to say, "You ungrateful people, I've had it with you". But no, God says to Moses, "I'm going to rain bread from heaven for you"

But when the people see the bread in the morning, they say to each other, manna, "What is it?"

Strange but true, sometimes when we're so upset and so focused on what used

to be, often a reality that is unreal, we can't recognise the new food God is providing.

The Israelites find themselves in the wilderness, the unknown, it's uncomfortable, the future uncertain, the breeding ground for anxiety and nostalgia.

And more often than not when we too find ourselves in the wilderness nostalgia has a way of creeping up on us.

You know the past is a nice place to visit but a terrible place to live.

Since starting my training to become a Church of Scotland Minister some people have asked me why on earth I would want to do that?!

The people of Scotland's appetite for churches is in decline so why would I want to become a minister in a country that doesn't seem to want them as much as they used to in the good old days?

Well, the culture may have changed but deep down the people remain constant. They still wrestle with the same questions about their worth and values, still worry about the future or mistakes made. They still sense that this world is not all there is.

The Church's call is to respond, and I am excited to be part of that.

But the Church has known for almost 3 decades, 3 generations of such decline, churches closing, congregations merging but perhaps in finding itself in the wilderness the Church has been choked with nostalgia.

True story: in one congregation, an elder would sometimes turn to the new Minister and say "Now when "so and so" Minister X was our Minister this is how we did things" The new Minister left after a few years and the church conducted a survey to help members think about the future. One question was "What do you like best about our church" And three or four people said what they liked best was the beloved Rev X who had been gone for several years.

Seriously. We can get stuck in nostalgia. The danger of nostalgia is not in looking to the past, but in longing for the past.

So, in every time and place the Church rummages through the fridge, pokes about the pantry, opens the kitchen drawer scouring around to see what it needs to keep and what needs to go. Asking which church doctrine still brings sustenance to the Church and a needy world, which practices are stale and rancid, and which are still vibrant and life-giving. These are the questions the church asks in every age.

And each of us is called to rummage, searching adventure but this time to contemplate our own lives. How might you and I be living in the past, in comfortable nostalgia that masks our fear, our need for control and spiritual inertia and does not trust God to provide us with the new food every day?

Before lockdown, up in Arisaig, Ross, Benjamin and I decided to try a restaurant we had heard of but never visited. It was a bit far out, just a hole in the wall. We walked, crunching our feet on the gravel car park, and got to the entrance.

We went inside. Customers sat in booths and tables. Waitresses hustled from table to table. The waitress seated us at a booth, got us a highchair, it took a good while but eventually she took our drinks order.

And then almost immediately another waitress came and began uploading food on the table before us – chicken pie, chunky potato wedges, steaming vegeta-

bles, crusty bread and butter.

The waitress left. And Ross and I looked at one another puzzled. The food had just appeared, we hadn't ordered anything.

Ross, called the waitress over and said, "Sorry we haven't ordered this food". "Oh, this must be your first time here?" she said "We serve family style; we bring you everything and then if you want more, we bring you more."

Which was fine, but really we had a notion for fish n' chips that day!

Sometimes in life we sit at God's table and complain that our order is taking too long and it's not what we ordered anyway and it's not the way it used to be.

But other times we take our place at the overflowing table to receive a meal we did not order, a meal we could never have expected, a meal prepared for a new place, a new day. And we leave that table with bellies and hearts full. Absolutely full.

When we are faced with the wilderness, we often will do anything to escape it.

Still around the corner, there may wait a new road or a secret gate.

Ghandi says, in the midst of darkness light persists.

God loves us as we are but refuses to leave us where we are. God calls us beyond nostalgia. And maybe, just maybe, we need to sit in and with the wilderness for a while.

Silence isn't empty, it's full of answers.

And out of the wilderness God sent manna to his people.

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

Amen.

PRAYER

They darted this way and that,
probing, foraging and exploring,
secure in their own little world.
Were they aware of me looking in,
conscious of another plane,
an altogether different dimension
beyond the boundaries that confined them?

There is so much, Lord, that I don't see,
the world of my senses not the whole story
but just a glimpse of reality,
one aspect of a greater whole.

Save me from being bound by my past, my limited horizons,
closing my life to wonders beyond
and riches yet to be revealed.

Open my heart to your infinite love
greater than eye has seen or mind conceived.
Light of the world

shine wherever there is darkness today,
where there is pain and sorrow
may the brilliance of your love bring joy.
Where there is sickness and suffering,
may your healing touch bring sunshine after the storm.
Where there is greed and corruption,
may your radiance scatter the shadows.
Where there is hatred and bitterness,
may your brightness dispel the clouds.
Lord Jesus Christ
light of the world,
rise again upon us I pray,
and illuminate the darkness of this world
through your life-giving grace.
In Your name we ask it.
Amen.

BENEDICTION

Look forward in faith
All time is in God's hand
Walk humbly with Him
and trust his future plan
God has wisely led
his people by his power
Look forward in hope
he gives us this new hour
Go in Peace,
and may the Blessing of God Almighty,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit
be with you and with all whom you love both now and forevermore.

Broomhill Hyndland Church of Scotland
Minister: Rev George Mackay

Tel 0141 959 8694 Mob 07711 569 127

Church Office: 64 - 66 Randolph Road, Glasgow G11 7JL Tel 0141 334 2540
office@broomhillhyndlandchurch.org www.broomhillhyndlandchurch.co.uk
Scottish Charity Number SC007820