



**Broomhill Hyndland
Parish Church**

“Lighting the Way”

for **Sunday 5 September 2021**

Welcome to another Sunday - now in the month of September !

Next Sunday, probably in some limited way, we will be celebrating Harvest. The trees in the manse garden are slowly beginning to turn as we move from summer, which has been even for me, relatively pleasant, to the season of autumn, or as I prefer, fall.

The word ' fall' always describes more accurately what happens as the leaves fall to the earth, only to rise in the joy of springtime.

Robert Limond's funeral will now take place on Wednesday 15th September at Clydebank Crematorium at the time of 10.30am. Christine has asked that if you are intending to come, to give your name if you can to Victor or Anne Craig. Like our church service here, whilst some regulations have eased, track and trace still applies. It is slightly easier here, generally we know who attends and where you sit, but a funeral can be more complicated, so, please help out if you can.

Tea fellowship is available at the end of the service in the small hall - as always, our thanks to those who help out in this way. The Flower Ministry are always keen to send the flowers into the parish, so if you are aware of anyone who would love to have them displayed in their house, please let the team know. One family we are rejoicing with is the Duff's/ Craig's. Ruth gave birth to baby Robyn last Sunday - both are doing well.

Approaching soon, our Kirk Session meeting, also on Wednesday 15th, as well as WD40 at 2pm.

Every blessing, *George*

Sunday 5 September – Pentecost 15 (Year B)

Call to Worship

Intimations

HY 200 Christ is made the sure foundation

Children's Address

The Lord's Prayer

HY 340 When Jesus saw the fishermen

Prayer of Approach

Readings: Psalm 125

James 2: 1-10,14-17

HY 685 For everyone born, a place at the table

Gospel: Mark 7:24-37

HY 549 How deep the Father's love for us

Sermon

Offering and Offertory Prayer
HY 555 Amazing grace
Benediction and Threefold Amen
Uplifting of Scripture

Rest in His arms read, reflect, rejoice...

CALL

You persistent women seeking healing
for your children and for the world
come and worship.

You suffering children crying out in the darkness,
crying for comfort, crying for justice, crying for peace,
come and worship.

You who cannot hear, and you whose voices have been silenced,
come and worship the one who will open your ears
and listen to your laments with compassion and with love.

Let us worship God.

PRAYER OF APPROACH AND LORD'S PRAYER

'Open our eyes, Lord,
we want to see Jesus,
to reach out and touch him
and say that we love him;
open our ears Lord,
and help us to listen:
O open our eyes, Lord,
we want to see Jesus.'

There is so much we miss as we look through our eyes
trained to see only the familiar, the expected, the safe, the routine.
There is so much we miss listening to the recognisable voices,
who sing the same tunes as we do,
those who speak our language from the in-crowd.

Thank you, God, that you don't see this way.
You look at each of us, woman and man, old and young, rich and poor
and you love what you see. Even in the shadows of our shame and sin,
even in the cold valleys of our grief and regret
You see us – not just as we are, but as we can be – as you made us to be.

You see the glory, and the giftedness, and the possibility;
the nobility and the divine likeness which you placed there.
Thank you for how you see us, God.
Please give us new eyes to see ourselves and others the way you do.

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,
and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever. AMEN

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

Lord Jesus Christ, by the power of your presence open the mind of God to us,
that in your light we may see the light and in your strength be strong. AMEN

REFLECTION

I sit at the breakfast table, for the morning arithmetic of counting out my pills.
A tablet for blood pressure; a tablet for my throat; a tablet for my skin; a tablet
to prevent the adverse reactions of the pills I have just taken, though I've
stopped the tablets for gout, preferring to drink cherry juice everyday as an al-
ternative.

Some are horse tablets; others very small. Most are unpleasant to taste and can
be bitter – such is my daily regime.

Flicking through my Facebook pages, with an espresso in my other hand, I came
across this quotation:

'One of the hardest pills I had to swallow was realising I meant nothing to peo-
ple that meant a lot to me.'

Like some of the tablets I had just taken, the quote stuck in my throat.

Have you been there, invested time, given a lot in a relationship and realised
that the affection, enthusiasm and yes, love, was only one way? I have been
there, with family and with friends; with people who took up the time, wanted
something from me and then moved on. I have listened to the wise words of my
mother-in-law, seeing my reaction to these situations, telling me 'They are only
friends with you because you are the minister.'

Harsh that might be, but said with a love-coated reality.

There are two stories within our Gospel reading this morning: one about a Sy-
ro-phoenician woman, the other about a man who was deaf and struggled to
speak.

I want you imagine how they felt.

They had been told that they did not belong, the stories are about exclusion.

Even though they had invested in their spiritual life and given their praises and
prayers to God, because one was a woman, because one had a disability, all the
faith had invested – they are being told that effort meant nothing to God – that
their love went only one way, and if we are cruel, meant nothing to the Al-

mighty. We know from the way the Bible pans out, that initially, God's grace had been given only to the chosen people, the children of Israel. We therefore understand that the crumbs that fall from the table comment, refers to ourselves, the Gentiles, who did not in the first instance belong at the table.

It's as if the whole trajectory of the Bible, from Abraham in Genesis chapter 12, is altered, and the Gentiles enter the covenant by a combination of the wonder of God's grace and the Gentiles' own awareness of their need.

Here, in the second story, the man who has swallowed that bitter pill long enough about being excluded, although he cannot articulate the truth of what he believes, approaches Jesus. Jesus touches him, spits on him (like a sign of baptism) and the Aramaic phrase 'Ephphatha' is said, which means 'be opened.'

Everything is being opened.

The man's ears, his mouth also; but also the covenant between God and Israel.

What we have is a visual and tangible portrayal of the opening of God's heart towards the Gentiles – towards those who seemed inferior, excluded, and the unclean. Two stories: the first, where God opens up to us, the second, we opened up to God. These aren't really stories about disability or suffering: they're about salvation, and how it becomes limitlessly deep and limitlessly broad.

And it is on this being-opened, this precise moment in the gospel, that our salvation, deep and broad, depends.

But let's go back to the bitter pill, that some of the relationships are only way. I suppose there are two choices: to be like the Syrophenician woman and the man with a disability and refuse to give up, to recognise that the love that you have for God, or for those you have developed a closeness too is worth fighting for; or, as in other areas of the Gospel, like the disciples, to shake the dust off our feet and walk on. You can learn from God to continue to be open and welcoming and await, if I can point to another reading, the Father who waits for his wayward son.

In all relationships there are blind spots. If the stories in the Gospel today tell us anything, then it is the need to be open to our own faults, as well as those we perceive have let us down – and our prime example is Jesus himself, for it is Jesus who also gets his eyes opened and his ears unstopped.

It is the Son of God who must face his own blind spots, his own apparent rudeness and his own prejudices, so that he too can understand the full implications and the uncomfortable truths of the Gospel.

For days without respite he has fed the multitudes, healed the sick, liberated the demon-possessed, and confronted the Pharisees — all while putting up with his perpetually clueless disciples. For any number of understandable reasons, Jesus needs a break.

But a break isn't what he gets. Instead, he gets a Syrophenician woman — an inconvenient outsider who barges into the house where Jesus is staying, bows down at his feet, and begs him to cast a demon out of her daughter.

What makes sense to me is that the Jesus we encounter in this passage, is fully human — a product of his time and place, shaped as we all are by the conscious and unconscious biases, prejudices, and entitlements of his culture. Moreover, he is God incarnate, a holy Son still working out the scope and meaning of the divine vocation his Father has given him. He knows he's meant to share the

Good News. But even he needs to “be opened” to how radically good that good news is.

If Jesus, fully human, fully incarnate, needs to understand about the giving and taking in relationships, then so do we and so he opens himself up to learn.

In conversation, in harsh comments and rebuttals, the woman realises that her faith in God really matters to God. The bitter pill that she has, like the man who cannot hear, that she should be excluded and rejected, has been swallowed by Jesus too.

That all these people: tax collectors, sinners, prostitutes, unclean,, all these people and more who believed that their faith gave them nothing back suddenly have discovered that Jesus will be at the heart of the taboo-busting, division-destroying ministry that is needed in his culture and also in this world today.

I can hear her, I can hear him, I can hear them, saying to Jesus,

‘One of the bitterest pills I have had to swallow was realising that I meant nothing to the faith that meant a lot to me.’

‘Where is my Good News?’

‘Where is my place at the table?’

If there is one thing that brings tremendous pain, conflict and brokenness in our world, it is our tendency to polarise ourselves.

Our divisions of rich and poor, men and women, believer and non-believer, gay and straight, western and eastern, white and black, powerful and weak, have done little to help us, but have left war, hunger, homelessness, and hatred in their wake. Yet, the Scriptures show clearly this week that God is the God of all, and God’s grace and mercy are available to all.

I know relationships come and go. Some people are fair weather friends and others are with you to the end. I look at Afghanistan and I wonder what those left, think of those who have walked away. I watch homes being destroyed by fire and flood and a world get its priorities all wrong.

There are many people, it seems, who have thought people cared for them but now have swallowed that bitter pill. Thank God for being open. Thank God for Jesus being open to change. Thank God for not walking away.

Glory be to the Father, to the Son and the Holy Spirit. AMEN

OFFERTORY PRAYER

God of all good gifts,
you have provided all that we need for full lives,
and yet we don’t stop there –
we continue to fill our lives
with things in an elusive search for security.

As we bring gifts to you this day,
remind us that only deeper faith
will bring peace, and good works—
caring for others through generous giving—
will help us know the joy of full lives.

We pray this in the name of Christ,
who gave all out of love for all your children. AMEN

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

"... it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." Mark 7
It's not fair, when the woman responded.
It's unjust, she challenged.

Was there a silence while you took your breath?
Was there hushed stillness as you turned to see?
Was there an epiphany in the time it took you to recover from the retort?
That woman was going where angels feared to tread
and she trod on your toes!

And thank you God that she did,
for who wouldn't face the greatest hurdle
if they thought it would bring good to a loved one :
her daughter, my child, their partner.
Thank you God for the risk takers,
who teach us the length that love is willing to go,
and the barriers love will not stop at,
and the line love is willing to cross.
May we be such risk takers for you.
But your cross was beyond any risk we can imagine.

Thank you God
that you are the ultimate risk-taker:
without a limit to the love you offer us,
without a barrier at which love will stop,
without a line beyond which love will not cross
for us your daughters and sons,
your children,
your partners.
In such risk-taking for us,
it is we who find the silence
that takes our breath away.

BENEDICTION

As you have been fed by the Word, go to feed the hungry.
As you have been set free, go to set free the imprisoned.
As you have been received – give.
As you have heard – proclaim.
Go in Peace... and May the Blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy
Spirit, be with you this day.

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