

Barthol Chapel and Tarves Sunday 22 November 2020

## Worship Materials

Conducted by Fiona Lister



### Welcome

### Call to Worship — Psalm 100, Message Translation

On your feet now – applaud God!  
Bring a gift of laughter,  
Sing yourselves into his presence.  
Know this: God is God and God, God.  
He made us; we didn't make him.  
We're his people, his well-tended sheep.  
Enter with the password: "Thank you!"  
Make yourselves at home, talking praise.  
Thank you. Worship him.  
For God is sheer beauty,  
All-generous in love,  
Loyal always and ever.  
Let us worship this amazing God

## **694 Brother Sister let me serve you**

### **Prayer followed by Lord's Prayer**

### **Reading – Matthew 25:31-46**

### **Musical interlude – 426 All Heaven declares**

### **Reflection**

In the 1800s the Virgin Islands, situated in the Caribbean, encountered an infestation of rats. This was a non-native species which arrived on the island with cargo ships. Due to the warm climate, they quickly bred and took a liking to the sugar cane fields, causing massive damage and loss of profit. In an effort to control the population, the local farmers decided to introduce mongoose to the islands, thinking that they would keep the rats under control. Unfortunately, mongoose tend to be most active during the day, sleeping in their burrows at night whilst rats are more nocturnal generally choosing to nap during the day. The result of this was that the islands of the Caribbean now had 2 invasive, non-native species to contend with which were disrupting the ecosystem. This feels like a classic case of the path to hell being paved with good intentions!

But what does it mean to have good intentions? I might say that it was my intention to put on a load of washing this morning before worship. That would be a good intention and one that would be appreciated by everyone in the house. Why did I not follow through with my intention to wash the clothes? Was it because I couldn't be bothered getting out of bed? The intention was certainly good, but I didn't follow through with actions, so the clothes remain dirty and my daughter won't have a school uniform for tomorrow and unless I follow through with action, no amount of good intentions will change that fact.

When we look at the passage this morning in Matthew, this is the context in which we should read the difference between the righteous and the unworthy. It is not what we do but the intention with which we do it which makes the difference. Jesus is not asking for perfection; he knows our humanity and our weaknesses too well for that.

Let's put this into practical terms - why do we give to charity? Is it a public event which everyone needs to know about? Or is it a private, secret donation? Although they raise a lot of money, which does a lot of good, I sometimes find these public appeals such as Children in Need or Comic Relief a little obscene. I wonder whether some of the celebrities have more interest in furthering their careers than in raising money. Is being seen to be good more important than actually doing good?

Maybe this is cynical, it is certainly judgemental, and it is not my place to judge the motivations of another. That is made clear within this passage as well. We are not called to pass judgement upon one another, it is Jesus who is the judge. There is a reason why it is sheep and goats which will be separated. Unlike the sheep and goats, we might find in Scotland today, the varieties which are more common in Palestine look very similar. You have to look closely to tell the difference and if you saw one on its own you might be unsure. In the same way, we cannot tell just by looking at a person where their true motivation lies. Sometimes the person who is shouting the loudest and making the biggest display of being good and charitable, will be meanspirited and selfish when the spotlight is turned off. Or they may be using their celebrity or popular status in order to truly highlight a good cause and they may be as genuine behind the scenes as they are in front of the camera.

We may speculate on others, but we cannot truly know. What we can know, and influence, is our own motivations. When we are charitable, when we offer a helping hand to others – why are we doing it? Is it to look good or is it because it is the right thing to do? Are we indiscriminate in our helping or do we only help those like us, those we think of as deserving? Do we make a judgement call on who is worthy of receiving our help?

Jesus did not refuse to help any in need. Some were grateful, others were not. Many of the people he healed were on the outskirts of society and more than healing their physical ailments he restored them to their position. He gave them their pride and self-respect back. But they didn't all thank him for it.

Don't get me wrong, as individuals – or even as our own church community - we cannot help everyone in need. We don't have the capacity to do that. We need to listen for who we are truly called to help and focus on them, and we need to trust that others will be called to help in different situations. We don't do it to be recognised or even thanked, we do it because it is the right thing to do.

The reformed tradition to which we belong, focuses on the importance of God's grace being free for all. We don't earn it; we don't work for it. God loves us because God loves us. We could never do enough to earn it. So why bother to reach out to others? This passage seems to contradict this understanding, it seems to suggest that we do need to work for our salvation, we do need to be doing the right things in order to be saved. But is this what it is truly saying?

We love God because He first loved us. We don't just know about him; this isn't an academic point or description of an abstract deity. We know God, we have a relationship with Him. We are recipients of God's incomparable love. When we are in a relationship then that love is reciprocated. It is a two-way thing. When you love someone then you do things for them, not because you have to but because you want to. You want to express that love in a practical way. So, we do not have to work for our salvation, we already have it through God's grace. What we are called to do is express our relationship with God in practical love towards one another, show each other the care and concern which God has shown us. To be indiscriminate in our love for others as God has been indiscriminate in his love for us.

This parable is only one aspect of the great picture which Jesus is building up throughout Matthew. Earlier in the book Jesus describes himself as the bridegroom and as the master. He is a King, and he is a judge. In each situation he gives his listeners examples of how they may choose to respond – they can be wise and watchful; they can be productive, or they can be foolish and lazy.

This morning I lay this challenge before you, and also to myself. Are we judgemental in our charity? Do we give to receive thanks, do we give only to

those who we deem worthy, do we give to look good? Is our giving and our charity about us or about the recipient. What is our motivation?

Today is traditionally known as Christ the King Sunday. It is the last day of the Christian year – next week we move into the season of advent and a new year. Today is the culmination of the position of Christ in our lives which started last year with advent when we looked at Jesus entering the world as an infant, it moved through his life and mission, his death and resurrection and what it means to be filled with the holy spirit. Today we see Christ as the King of our lives, the Lord of all, the judge of the world. We are called to worship him with all that we have and all that we are. So, let us worship him with our love, let us worship him with our response to the outpouring of his love and grace to us by showing that love and grace to others. The path to hell may be paved with good intentions but the path to heaven is paved with right motivations. When our responses are Christ-centred then we are living the life we are called to live.

Amen

## **Prayer**

## **129 The Lord is king**

## **Benediction**

.....

## **NOTICES**

**Next Sunday 29 November:**

**First Sunday of Advent including Communion**

**9.45am for 10.00am Joint Worship on Zoom (Service commences 10.00am)** If you would like to be added to the e-mail list for the link to Sunday's live worship gathering on zoom or join in on your land-line please contact: Rob e-mail [sessionclerk@bartholchapel.org](mailto:sessionclerk@bartholchapel.org) or Susanna Tel 851345 or e-mail [smbichard@aol.com](mailto:smbichard@aol.com). Worship next week will be led by Fiona Lister from Kemnay. Fiona is a student at Aberdeen University, training for ministry.

## **Advent Worship**

During the four Sundays of Advent our worship will be linked to the traditional themes of hope, peace, joy and love. Over the next week please think about these themes and email Alison with suggestions of objects or images that symbolise for you one of these themes and I will include these in our worship. It would be good to have one from everyone who has been taking part in these Zoom services.

Also we are still looking for photos (preferably local) to include in prayer Powerpoints.

## **Advent Craft Challenge!**

Celebrating Christmas is going to be different this year. We are having to think about new and exciting ways to celebrate our Lord's birth. We should enjoy this unusual opportunity to try new ideas and new ways of doing things. In past years there has been a Wreath making session at Tarves church in the weeks before Christmas, which has been messy, but a lot of fun, but we won't be able to get together to do that this year. So I have had another, different idea - hopefully one that will be equally fun, and possibly equally messy. The only difference is that the mess will be in your own home not the church!

The idea involves Christmas baubles, which we will design and decorate. There will be no right or wrong way to do it, and no skills are required apart from a willingness to get messy and to share your creation with others once it is finished!

If you would like to find out more, then there will be Zoom meeting at the beginning of December at which I will explain my idea. We will then meet again, via Zoom, one or two weeks later to show off our 'works of art'. Because this is something you will be doing at home, you will be able to involve the whole family. I am sure you will have some great ideas about what you can do and I hope you will enjoy yourselves!

Valerie

Please email: [vmitchell@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:vmitchell@churchofscotland.org.uk) to register your interest!

**Wednesday Worship Tarves Church 2.00pm** a short act of worship in the Church.

**Thursday 26 November Community Bible Experience 4.00pm** when we will be discussing discoveries we make on reading Haggai, Zechariah, Joel and Malachi.

**Care in the Community** if you are aware of anyone in Tarves who needs help of any kind please contact Ruth 851887. If you are aware of anyone in Barthol Chapel please contact James Hepburn 806611.

**Pastoral Care** If you would like to speak to the minister please contact Alison 851295.