

WELCOME

God welcomes us to worship this morning as we meet in person or online.

Over the coming weeks we, as congregations and Kirk Sessions of Ashkirk, Ettrick & Yarrow and Selkirk, will be invited to think through how we reach out to our communities with God's love, how we share the Good News of God's love for all through our words and our actions. That is an instruction from the General Assembly and one which we need to allow God to show us where He is at work and how He wants us as His church to be with Him to help.** We are His hands, His feet, His eyes, ears, mouth in today's world. Over the coming weeks we will be using the 5 Marks of Mission as the theme for our services to help us grapple with these questions. Where is God working and how does He want us to help Him? Your thoughts are vital. Can I invite you to invite God to show you what He is saying to you and then be willing to share it with us as we work together to bring His kingdom life here on earth in our particular communities. Last week we looked at the promise of God found in *Jeremiah 29:11* – I'm going to read it again and the following verse too. ¹¹ *For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

This is the promise of the God who is love and who longs to share His love with us so that we can share it with those we meet. Our first hymn reminds us that God's love is a shepherd like love.

HYMN 462 The King of love my Shepherd is

The king of love my shepherd is whose goodness faileth never
I nothing lack if I am his and He is mine for ever

Where streams of living water flow, my ransomed soul He leadeth
And where the verdant pastures grow with food celestial feedeth

Perverse and foolish oft I strayed but yet in love He sought me
And on His shoulder gently laid and home rejoicing brought me

In death's dark vale I fear no ill with Thee dear Lord beside me
Thy rod and staff my comfort still Thy cross before to guide me

Thou spread'st a table in my sight Thy unction grace bestoweth
And O what wonder and delight from Thy pure chalice floweth

And so through all the length of days Thy goodness faileth never

Good Shepherd may I sing Thy praise within Thy house forever

Henry Williams Baker (1821-1877~) From Psalm 23

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Holy and Almighty God we bow before you in worship and praise. You are the God who made us, who sustains us and who calls us into Your Holy Presence in order to be enveloped in Your arms of love.

Arms which flung stars into space, arms which touched the untouchables, cradled those in need, healed, broke bread and then stretched out on the cross for us and for all people who turn to You. We bow in adoration and praise recognising Your call to come to You for sustenance.

Holy and Almighty God as we rest in Your Presence, as we receive from You the life giving, life renewing energy You offer we hear Your voice telling us to, “Go and do likewise.” As we are refreshed and renewed You ask us to refresh and renew others by sharing the love You offer with them. Yet all too often we fail to hear that command to go, we deliberately ignore that command to go, we go but fail to follow Your way to the end. We come to You today sorry that this is so, to confess to You our failures and to seek Your forgiveness. We bow in repentance with our arms outstretched in prayer and pleading. Thank you that You invite us to listen to Your voice saying, “My child you are forgiven, now come follow me once more.”

We rise to praise and worship You through our willingness to follow You. Please take us and our money and show us Your way of love and service once more. In Jesus’ name we pray saying together the prayer He taught, 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 Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever. Amen

READING **Luke 9:1-6**

Read by Elissa Jones (Selkirk)

9 Jesus called the twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases. ² Then he sent them out to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick, ³ after saying to them, “Take nothing with you for the trip: no walking stick, no beggar's bag, no food, no money, not even an extra shirt. ⁴ Wherever you are welcomed, stay in the same house until you leave that town; ⁵ wherever people don't welcome you, leave that town and shake the dust off your feet as a warning to them.” ⁶ The disciples left and travelled through all the villages, preaching the Good News and healing people everywhere.

REFLECTION

Romans 10 ¹¹⁻¹³ Scripture reassures us, “No one who trusts God like this—heart and soul—will ever regret it.” It's exactly the same no matter what a person's religious background may be: the same God

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for all of us, acting the same incredibly generous way to everyone who calls out for help. “Everyone who calls, ‘Help, God!’ gets help.”¹⁴⁻¹⁷ But how can people call for help if they don’t know who to trust? And how can they know who to trust if they haven’t heard of the One who can be trusted? And how can they hear if nobody tells them? And how is anyone going to tell them, unless someone is sent to do it? That’s why Scripture exclaims, A sight to take your breath away! Grand processions of people telling all the good things of God! But not everybody is ready for this, ready to see and hear and act. Isaiah asked what we all ask at one time or another: “Does anyone care, God? Is anyone listening and believing a word of it?” The point is: Before you trust, you have to listen. But unless Christ’s Word is preached, there’s nothing to listen to.

Jesus’ instructions to his disciples were explicit. They were to go to preach and heal. Theology and action are to be inextricably linked. Both are vital. Christians – you and me must practise what we preach and indeed preach what we practise.

The Sunday before I started at New College back in 1995 my minister and congregation prayed for me. Prior to that prayer the minister told the congregation that I was going to study Theology and asked, “What is theology?” The answer is in two words – God, words! Telling others about God, His love for all people, His care of all people, His willingness to use all people in sharing the message of His Good News for all – a new kingdom of love, peace, justice is to come into being. A kingdom where reconciliation between God and people and between people themselves will happen, where renewal will take place, where forgiveness is to be found.

Jesus talked frequently about the Kingdom of God coming in – you’ll find His teaching about kingdom values in **Matthew chapters 5-7** – very much worth reading and pondering over. His parables in **Luke’s Gospel especially 13:18-21** remind us that His kingdom starts from very small beginnings – a mustard seed, a bit of yeast to name but two.

Several things interest me about the visual aids used by Jesus. They were things which were in common use. Mustard seeds and yeast both very small and seemingly insignificant. They both took time before any effect of using them appeared but when the time was right they both produced spectacular results. They also made certain that the future was secured through self perpetuation. Mustard seeds grow out of mustard seeds. The way bread was made in those days meant a bit of the dough which had yeast already in was kept and used it to start off the next batch.

The kingdom of Heaven is like this, a mustard seed, yeast. They work away unseen, they take time but produce tremendous results. *What is the mustard seed, the yeast in your life, in the life of the church?* Sowing a mustard seed, putting yeast into dough, two small actions which have huge consequences.

It would be good for each of us to think what tiny action we could take or are already taking, to sow seeds of love in order to bring the Kingdom of God to the folk of our community.

What actions are we taking or should we be taking as churches to sow seeds of love in our communities?

Matthew 10:5-15 and Mark 6.7-13 also have this sending out of the twelve. It is good to read the different accounts which have slightly different emphases. The core teaching remains the same however.

1) **No specialist equipment is needed.** They only needed themselves and their story of how Jesus' love had affected their lives. *Peter* in his first letter *chapter 3 verses 15,16* tells us to ***be ready at all times to answer anyone who asks you to explain the hope you have in you, doing it with gentleness and respect.***

Each of us has a story to tell of how knowing Jesus' love has changed our lives. It's a story no one can contradict. They might choose not to believe it but they can't negate it. It is good to take time to think through why we believe what we believe, how we have come to know and experience God's love in our own lives and then share that with a friend. It's good too to remember that we need to update our stories when we learn more, when we experience more of God's love in our lives.

2) **The second similarity is in Jesus' instruction to leave if people don't believe.** Jesus' explicit instruction is to tell and then go if folk don't respond. We should not feel guilty if the message doesn't hit home. We are called to tell. It is the Holy Spirit's work to challenge and guide each individual who hears the message.

*Are there things in our personal lives and in the life of our churches which are **not** bearing fruit? What is God asking us to leave be in order to have energy and time for new initiatives?*

Verse 9 says ***And he (Herod) tried to see him (Jesus).*** He had questions, Herod didn't understand but he wanted to know more. It doesn't say whether he was able to see Jesus and have his questions answered but it strikes me that it might have been recorded if he had. If he didn't, why was he unable to meet Jesus – did he not make the effort required or did the disciples keep him away like they tried to keep the children away? It makes me wonder, it challenges me, as to what actions of mine might prevent someone from meeting Jesus for themselves.

Who in our circle of friends, who in our community has questions that they would like to explore? How do we find out and how do we help them in that exploration? What actions of the church, myself might be keeping folk from experiencing God's love for themselves?

Like love and marriage in the song, Jesus in this passage reminds us that telling others the Good News should be happening through **what we say** and **what we do** – you can't have one without the other.

Let us take time to ponder these questions this coming week. Ask God to show you the answers and then can I suggest you take a note of them so that you can pass on the ones that are relevant to what we are

thinking of as churches as we move forward to find where God is already working, and be ready and willing to join Him there. Amen

HYMN 616 There's a spirit in the air

- 1 There's a spirit in the air,
telling Christians everywhere :
'Praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working in our world !'
- 2 Lose your shyness, find your tongue,
tell the world what God has done :
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today !
- 3 When believers break the bread,
when a hungry child is fed,
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working, in our world.
- 4 Still the Spirit gives us light,
seeing wrong and setting right :
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today !
- 5 When a stranger's not alone,
where the homeless find a home,
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working, in our world.
- 6 May the Spirit fill our praise,
guide our thoughts and change our ways.
God in Christ has come to stay.
Live tomorrow's life today !
- 7 There's a Spirit in the air,
calling people everywhere :
praise the love that Christ revealed,
living, working, in our world.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Barbara Usher (Ashkirk)

Holy God, we thank you for the Good News of Jesus Christ. As we remember those who have shared Jesus with us, introducing Him to us as a friend, we lift them to you in prayer with thankfulness. Give us we pray, the resolve and the opportunity to find someone to share You with in the days and weeks ahead. May we share you with our friends, as in the example set by John the Baptist. May we be inspired by St Aidan, who shared not by dogma, but by respectful conversation and listening to others, only then sharing his own good news.

We pray for those in positions of leadership within our church, giving thanks for the ministry of Margaret, uphold and support her in her care for the parish. May she be blessed in her new life in Perth, knowing your loving support in all her new ventures. Bless those who work quietly in the background, the various church groups, and all who build up our common life.

Bless us individually and as a congregation as we seek to know your will for the future mission of our churches in Ashkirk, Ettrick & Yarrow and Selkirk; we live in an increasingly secular society. Inspire us with innovative, creative ways to live as you would have us live.

With awareness and thankfulness that we live in a safe place to share our faith, we pray for the safety of those who risk their lives and their liberty to share the Good News in cultures where this puts them in danger. We think of those Christians who are a beleaguered minority: in the Holy Land, in many Middle Eastern countries, and in Asia and all places where it is not safe to live as a Christian. We pray for those engaged in mission. There are so many mission societies. We lift them all to you, and remember especially here today: Jesus Said Go, a mission through storytelling, by training indigenous peoples to share Jesus in their own language; Compassion, a worldwide organisation which sponsors children in the name of Jesus, giving them the opportunity to escape poverty and bring change to their families and communities.

In our own country, we lift to you also those who fulfil Jesus' mission to work with those on the edge, at boundaries, those despised and rejected by others. Help us to recognise you in your guise as the hungry, the thirsty, the homeless, the refugee, the sick and those in prison – be it a physical prison, or of the mind or body, or of structural injustices like debt or poverty.

Father we ask that you be with those who fear what the future may bring – may we lead the way in exchanging 'a mantle of praise, for a spirit of fearfulness'. May our joy and praise of you crowd out our worries and concerns.

We ask for a blessing on those who work in the NHS, especially at this very difficult time, and those whose health is a concern to them and those who care for them. We remember those known to us in a moment of silence

We ask for fulfilment of your promise to comfort those who mourn – may they be given ‘a garland instead of ashes’. We remember those known to us in a moment of silence.....

God of Light and Dark, as the days get longer, help us to increase the light for others, so as to crowd out the darkness. Make us oaks of righteousness, to be a planting for the Lord, to display his glory. (Isaiah 61 v3) We ask these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

HYMN Our confidence is in the Lord

Our confidence is in the Lord
The source of our salvation
Rest is found in Him alone
The Author of creation
We will not fear the evil day
Because we have a refuge
In every circumstance we say
Our hope is built on Jesus

He is our fortress, we will never be shaken }
He is our fortress we will never be shaken } x2

We will put our trust in God, we will put our trust in God

Noel and Tricia Richards © 1989 Kingsway’s Thankyou Music

BENEDICTION

The Father who created you is with you
The Son who redeemed you is with you
The Spirit who strengthens and upholds you is with you.
Go knowing the blessing of the Presence of the Holy Three, the Almighty God in your life today and every day. Amen

**** Questions from the General Assembly via Presbytery to be thought through**

1. Congregations are encouraged to be outward looking, engaging with their communities and the wider ecumenical church. Please offer new ideas on how this might be achieved in your parish or record how you are already promoting successful and sustained local mission and ecumenical work.

2. For the church to find its place in the 21st Century it may have to create alternative worship and service opportunities differentiated to meet the needs of niche groups. How might your church accommodate the needs of those whose sense of belonging is primarily through informal gatherings, social networks and the virtual world?

3. As ministry teams and laity involvement grow how might the deployment of volunteer and paid ministry be used to enhance Mission and Service?