

Encouraging YOU to know JESUS

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!

Please note that our Interim Moderator and Locum, Rev. Rona Young, will be visiting those with pastoral needs by telephone during the coronavirus crisis. If in need of pastoral care, please contact Rona by telephone on (01292) 471982.

I know many of you will have welcomed the announcement by Nicola Sturgeon that churches can reopen for prayer and services of worship.

The Kirk Session has to discuss and weigh up all the issues involved before deciding whether or not to give permission for the church to reopen then two forms must be completed and submitted to Ayr Presbytery. After they have been passed, we can move forward.

Given the current guidelines, a very limited number of people would be able to attend and there would be no hymn singing during the service. Entry and exit would be by different doors and those attending would need to leave contact details and adhere to strict rules on the use of sanitizers and the use of a limited number of toilets etc.

Prior to reopening of the church, everyone will be informed by letter or e-mail of all the guidelines which must be followed.

Rona

The Minister's Message

Reflection "The Kingdom of Heaven"

Jesus knew that we sometimes get things wrong, and so, when he spoke about the kingdom of heaven, he used parables to describe what he meant.

Let us remember that Matthew's Gospel was written for the Jews, and Matthew himself had a Jewish background. He refers many times to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and demonstrates how they were fulfilled by Jesus. The Gospel is something new, but it is also a confirmation of the old.

In chapter 13, first of all there is the parable of the sower and then the explanation of it. After the parable of the weeds, there are five short parables. They all begin, "*The kingdom of heaven is like....*"

The parables of the mustard seed and the yeast

31 He told them another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. 32 Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.'

33 He told them still another parable: 'The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about thirty kilograms of flour until it worked all through the dough.'

34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

'I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden since the
creation of the world.'

The first two parables – the parable of the **mustard seed** and the parable of the **yeast**, are different illustrations about something small changing into something much bigger. We might wonder why Jesus chose something so small to represent the kingdom of heaven. A mustard seed is the smallest of seeds, and you could hold hundreds, if not thousands, in the palm of your hand.

Yet a mustard seed can grow into a large tree – a tree so big that it gives birds a home to shelter, where they can build their nests. The kingdom of heaven is like that mustard seed. It starts from the smallest of beginnings, and no one knows where it will end. It is a fact of history, that the greatest of things always have small beginnings.

One of the great stories of the Christian Church is the story of Telemachus. He was a hermit who lived in the desert, but something – the call of God – told him that he had to go to Rome.

And so, he went. At that time, Rome was nominally Christian, but the gladiatorial games went on, where men fought each other until one died and the crowds roared, lusting for blood.

Telemachus went to the games. Eighty thousand people were there to watch, and he was horrified. Were these men, killing each other, not children of God? He leapt from his seat, right into the arena, and stood between the gladiators. He was tossed aside, but he came back.

The crowd was angry and began to stone him. Suddenly, a sword flashed in the sunlight, and Telemachus was dead. There was complete silence. Suddenly the crowd realised what had happened: a holy man lay dead. Something happened that day in Rome, and there were never any more gladiatorial games.

By his death, one man cleansed the empire. So many great things have the smallest of beginnings.

When Jesus told parables, he always used the scenes and activities from everyday life. He began with things that were familiar to his listeners, in order to lead them to see things in a different way. In the next parable of the yeast, Jesus was thinking about a kitchen in an ordinary house. At that time, bread was baked in the home every day. The yeast was a little part of the dough, kept from the previous baking, that had fermented. Without yeast, the bread was hard, dry and unpleasant to eat, whereas bread with yeast, was soft, spongy and good to eat.

The point is that the kingdom of heaven requires only a small amount to be effective. It has a transforming power to change people's lives. It brings meaning and purpose, a complete change to both individuals and societies.

Bible Reading (2) Matthew 13: 44 – 46

The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl

⁴⁴ 'The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.'

⁴⁵ 'Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. ⁴⁶ When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.'

The next two parables also have similarities. They describe the kingdom of heaven's ability to mean so much to a person that everything else becomes unimportant.

Although the parable of the **treasure** seems strange to us, it would be perfectly natural to the people listening to Jesus. In the world at that time there were no such things as banks, and so money was often buried in the ground to keep it safe.

So, the kingdom of heaven is compared to the most valuable thing that a poor farmer could hope to find: treasure hidden in a field. When the farmer finds the treasure, he immediately buries it again, sells everything he has and buys the field. At that time the law said, that if you find treasure in your field, it belongs to you. It is as if Jesus is saying, that to enter the kingdom of heaven is worth any sacrifice.

In the second parable in this section, Jesus is saying that the kingdom of heaven is like a man who finds a fine **pearl**. William Barclay says that, to the people at that time, a pearl was the loveliest of all possessions, and people wanted to possess one not only for its value, but for its beauty. This man was searching for the rarest of pearls, and he finds the pearl of his dreams.

But there is a difference between these two short parables: in the first, the man was digging and not searching for treasure, whereas in the second, the man was searching for fine pearls. And, when he finds such a fine pearl, he sells everything and buys it.

Possibly Jesus is saying that you can discover the kingdom in two different ways: someone can be searching for it or it can be discovered accidentally. Either way it is such a valuable discovery that it is worth giving up everything for it.

As best he could, in language that the people would understand, Jesus made it clear that the most wonderful event in someone's life is to discover the kingdom of heaven, and to enter it with all their heart and soul and mind. When we enter the kingdom of heaven, we discover the true meaning of life in all its fullness.

Amen.

Seek ye first the kingdom of God

Prayer

Let us pray,

Almighty God,

we thank you for the many blessings you have poured into our lives, and for all the gifts that enrich them:

- the love we share,
- the beauty we see.
- the health we enjoy.
- the interests we pursue.

Despite the restriction we still have, there is so much to be thankful for.

Living God,

we thank you, that you are a God who hears and answers prayer, we thank you for the times you have heard us and responded to our requests.

As we have entered phase 3 in the easing out of lockdown, we pray that people will follow the strict guidelines when the hotels and restaurants open once again and as more families and friends spend time together. We pray for all those for whom this will increase the anxiety that they are feeling just now.

Loving God,

we do not just pray for the big things in life, but also the little, rejoicing that all situations are important to you. We bring before you the responsibilities of family life and parenthood, the problems of unemployment and making ends meet; the joys and sorrows of marriage and relationships.

We pray now for all those who are in special need of our prayers today –

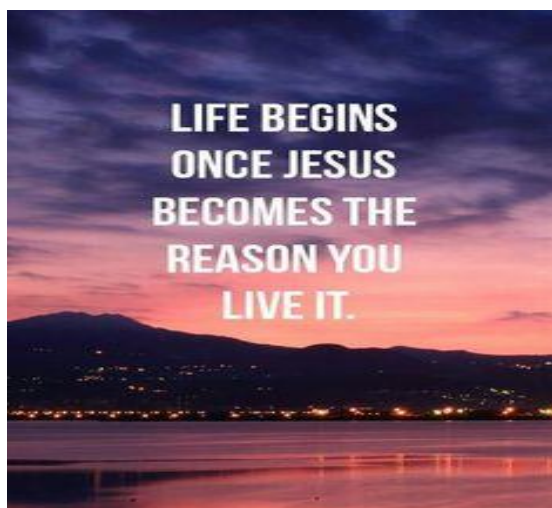
those who are battling with illness, either at home or in hospital and those who suffer from depression or anxiety. Be especially close to those who are grieving at this time.

Compassionate God, we commit them into your hands, knowing that they all matter to you, even more than they do to us.

This we pray through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord,

Amen.

Rona



Please remember in your prayers this week all of the people below in hospital, care homes or in their own homes:-

Mrs Margaret Burgess	Mrs Irene Gibson
Mrs Jeanette Steel	Mrs Ann Shaw
Mrs Christine Martin	Mr John Cassells
Mrs Maude Smillie	Mr James Alexander
Mrs Betty McPherson	Mrs May Wilkinson
Mrs Ellise Wilson	Mrs Heather McLeod
Mrs Anna Irving	Mrs Alison Wilson
Mrs Catherine MacDonald	Mrs Edith Gray

Please let the Session Clerk know of any member/relative who goes in to hospital or is ill at home. For those in hospital, please ensure you have their given Christian name which may not necessarily be the name by which s/he is usually known.

Prayer Chain Anyone having a request for prayer may contact Sheena Hunter on 01292 570200 or e-mail her at sheenahunter@hotmail.com

Prayer request There has been news about Raoul, Elizabeth and little Margaret the South American family who had been worshipping with us. They had returned to Peru to visit Raoul's family and have been caught by the spread of coronavirus there. Raoul was still with his parents in one of the jungle areas and Elizabeth had returned to Lima to Raoul's sister's home to prepare for their return to Scotland when the government implemented the lockdown. They are still apart. Having looked at the situation in Peru it is much worse than here in Scotland. They do not have an NHS and healthcare is not easily accessed in the rural areas. In some jungle towns there is an 80% infection rate. Despite the lockdown, the spread of the virus in Peru has reported more cases than every European country apart from the UK. More than 40% of households in Peru do not have a refrigerator so they have to shop frequently and especially in markets where there has been found to be a high incidence of Covid -19. Airports in Peru are closed for passenger air travel so a return to the UK is not possible. The family is well for now but would appreciate your prayers.

Salvation Army Foodbank A big thank you to all who have donated on past Sunday afternoons. Please note that donations will be accepted in the church drive between **2.00 and 3.00pm**. Only leave your car when the person before you has gone and, if possible, please place your contribution directly into the boot of the receiving car.

Malawi Austin Hunter has heard from Jailos, the Minister in Nkhata Bay Church in Malawi, that his wife Hilda is starting a 4-year B. of Ed. course in Social Sciences at the University of Malawi. This will upgrade her to Senior School teaching to strengthen the education at Nkhata Bay. Jailos did not ask directly for any money but was keen to make us aware of the need.

Austin is asking if some members or families may wish to share in helping with this. Loans for the tuition fees are only possible from the Govt. in Malawi in the 2nd year of study. The total cost of tuition, accommodation etc is £1,350 for the whole of the first academic year. If, say, six members or families might consider paying £25 for 9 months (of the academic year) that is a total of £225. Together that would be £1,350. If anyone is willing to help, or wants to ask more questions, please contact Austin direct on 07712 588659 or at austinbhunter@yahoo.com

Can you help? Newton Primary School is looking for a fridge (any size) and a washing machine for a family moving into the area. They have the means to PAT test any such donation. If you can help, please contact Irene Gibson at irenesgibson31@gmail.com

Birthdays During this coming week, we wish a very Happy Birthday to each of the following:-

17th July Niamh Jackson

18th July Rosemary Williams



Ayr: Newton Wallacetown Church of Scotland

A Scottish Charity Reference Number SC001994

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Twinned with Nkhata Bay Presbyterian Church, Malawi

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