

Encouraging YOU to know JESUS

*Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord!*

Please note that our Interim Moderator and Locum, Rev. Rona Young, will be on holiday from 7<sup>th</sup> until 14<sup>th</sup> September (inclusive). We hope both Rona and Tom have a peaceful and relaxing break. If in need of urgent pastoral care during Rona's absence, please contact Gary McCleary by telephone on 07931 952497.

### The Minister's Message

Good morning and welcome to our online service from Newton Wallacetown Church. No doubt many of you want to hear the result of the vote at the Kirk Session meeting on Thursday evening and the result was that a good majority voted for the church to reopen on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September at 11am. Everyone will receive a letter and a set of rules by email or by post towards the end of this week.

**The intimations** for today – the Extraordinary Times will be available from 12 noon and the prayer time is at 12.30pm, beginning with the Lord's Prayer followed by your own personal prayers. This is edition 25 of the Extraordinary Times and I'd like to thank Sheila for faithfully sending it out every Sunday for 25 weeks.

Donations for the foodbank will again be received between 2 and 3pm. Shena and Gordon Brown are on duty today.

As I said a few weeks ago, I have always taken two weeks off during the summer and so I am off again this week - from 7<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> September and I would like to thank Gary McCleary for covering once again for any funerals.

**Our Call to Worship** is from Psalm 90, *"O Lord, you have always been our home. Before you created the hills, or brought the world into being, you were eternally God, and will be God forever."*

**Hymn** led by the Praise Band, *"Praise is rising"*

I'd now like to thank the Praise Band for all their work and contributions to worship and Neil for all his work recording these services for 25 weeks without a break.

#### Prayer

Let us pray,

O God our Heavenly Father, although we are in our own homes, and not together here in the church, we can still all rejoice in your love and celebrate your goodness. You have richly blessed us and with grateful hearts, we praise and adore you.

We praise you, for all that you have done for us in Jesus. Through him we know about you and your wonderful love although we can never completely understand you.

We praise you for the way you have guided us throughout the years, for the assurance that you will continue to lead us every step of the way.

But Gracious God, we know that we have sinned against you and against one another, in thought, word and deed. We have failed you in so many different ways and ask you to forgive us. At times our thinking is too negative instead of positive. We have said things that should not have been said, and we have left unsaid, things that we should have said. Lord, forgive us. We are ashamed of our weaknesses and many faults, our greed, selfishness and pride. We have not always said our prayers and are not growing in our faith. Lord, forgive us.

We long to serve you better, to live as your people and bring honour to your name. Hear us, Lord God, as we confess our own personal sins to you....

Merciful God, assure us of our forgiveness, renew us through your love and give us the strength to follow you more faithfully.

This we pray through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

**Children's Talk – Jane Sibley**

**Hymn** *"Jesus put this song into our hearts"*

**Bible reading (1) Ezekiel 36: 24 – 28**

24 "'For I will take you out of the nations; I will gather you from all the countries and bring you back into your own land. 25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. 28 Then you will live in the land I gave your ancestors; you will be my people, and I will be your God.'"

**Bible reading (2) Matthew 15: 1 – 11**

*That which defiles*

1 Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, 2 'Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!' 3 Jesus replied, 'And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 For God said, "Honour your father and mother" and "Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death." 5 But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is "devoted to God," 6 they are not to "honour their father or mother" with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. 7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

8 "'These people honour me with their lips,  
but their hearts are far from me.  
9 They worship me in vain;  
their teachings are merely human rules.'"

10 Jesus called the crowd to him and said, 'Listen and understand. 11 What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.'

**Hymn**     *"Father in heaven, how we love you."*

**Sermon**     **"The Sixth Beatitude"**

Let us pray,

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts, be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our strength and our Redeemer. Amen*

A few weeks ago, we thought about the third Beatitude and this morning, we are going to see what the sixth beatitude can teach us: **"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God."**

Many commentators say that this is one of the greatest sayings in Scripture, but we cannot hope to "see God," until we deal with the sin that lies in our hearts.

I wonder how many of you remember the song, *"Love changes everything"* from the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *"Aspects of Love"*?

True love does change us, but when we accept Jesus into our hearts, there is a profound change in our lives. We are far more conscious of the things that we say, think and do that are wrong, and know that we need to ask God's forgiveness.

In the Old Testament, in the book of the prophet Ezekiel chapter 36, we heard at verse 26 that the Lord says to Israel, *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."*

In the following chapter is the well-known vision of the *"dry bones"* coming to life. Ezekiel shows how both Israel and Judah are dead because of their sins, but they are miraculously restored to life, by the forgiveness of God. When they confess their sin, God takes away their heart of stone, and gives them new hearts – hearts of flesh.

In the hymn, *"I the Lord of sea and sky"* which we will sing later, are the words,  
*"I will break their hearts of stone,  
give them hearts for love alone."*

God's promise is to give us a new heart. Jesus always emphasised the importance of the heart. The Pharisees in his day were so hypocritical – externally they were models of righteousness, they obeyed the law in every possible way, but internally, they were living the wrong way.

Let us think about the difference between an artificial

Christmas Tree and a cherry tree in the spring, full of blossom. What a contrast: the splendour of one is the twinkling lights and colourful decorations – but it is artificial, an imitation of a real tree, whereas the beauty of the other, is the natural expression of its inner life, and we can clearly see the difference.

We too can appear to live outwardly like a Christian but, inwardly, it is only through conversion, through a change of heart, that makes a person like the cherry tree, someone whose loveliness comes from the inside.

In his commentary, William Barclay says the passage we heard from Matthew chapter 15 is not easy to understand, but it is one of the most important passages in the Gospel. The Scribes and the Pharisees are totally bewildered by Jesus. They have never heard of anyone like him and so they have travelled from Jerusalem to Galilee, to put questions to him.

However, this passage entitled, *“Clean and unclean”* is not so much about the clash between Jesus and the Pharisees in a personal way, but about two different ways of understanding their religion, two different ways of obeying God. This passage speaks about things being *“unclean”* but it has nothing to do with physical cleanliness – it is ceremonial cleanliness. At that time, a person had to be clean to worship and approach God. If a person was unclean, then worship was not possible.

However, it was impossible to avoid everything that would make a person unclean. For example, a person may unknowingly touch a Gentile as they walked along the street. Touching an insect, or a certain animal, could also make a person unclean. The list went on and on.

The Jews had developed an elaborate system of washing and, over the years, it had become more and more elaborate. We have all been told the correct way to wash our hands to prevent catching the coronavirus, but the Jews were told that water had to be poured on the hands, with the fingers pointing upwards and then downwards. They had also to rub each hand with the fist of the other hand.

There were so many details to be followed each day, but to the orthodox Jew, these rituals were their religion, they believed that to do these things pleased God.

Jesus was asked, *“Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!”*

Jesus did not answer this question directly, but took an example of one of their man-made additions to the law, and contradicted it:

The fifth commandment says, *“Honour your father and your mother.”* But the Pharisees had added that, if they gave everything to God, then they were free from the duty of honouring their father and mother. We can imagine that over the years, through unfortunate circumstances, a man’s parents had become poor. If their son, a Pharisee, had officially dedicated all his money and belongings to God and to the Temple, then he could say to his parents, *“Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me, is a gift devoted to God.”*

Jesus is saying, that they are using these additions to the law, to avoid helping their father and their mother in a time of great need. This is not obeying the commandment given by God.

This is the way that the clash developed. To the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law, worship was about following the ritual and keeping the law. To Jesus, worship meant having a clean heart, and a life that showed love to others.

And this clash still exists today. Some people put great emphasis on external things, and everything must be done in the right way, to the exclusion of everything else.

It was William Temple, a former Archbishop of Canterbury in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who gave one of the best definitions of worship saying, we are to be aware of the holiness of God, feed our minds on the truth of God, open our hearts to the love of God, and dedicate our lives to serving God.

**“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”** The good news of Jesus is a Gospel of new things: a new birth, a new life, a new hope, and a new heart. As we thought about in the passage from Ezekiel, God promises the people *“a new heart and a new spirit.”* It is only when God replaces our old heart with a new one that we can see God, or come into the presence of God.

But, what does it mean to have a pure heart? It means we are to have an undivided heart. In Psalm 86 verse 11, the psalmist says,

*“Teach me your ways O Lord,  
and I will walk in your truth;  
give me an undivided heart,  
that I may fear your name.”*

The writer, Selwyn Hughes, whom I have quoted many times says, that once a young man confessed to him, *"I feel like a lot of pieces thrown together."* His life was not centred on one central purpose, and he did not feel co-ordinated.

We cannot function well in life if we have, within ourselves, an inner conflict. In Luke's Gospel Jesus says, *"a house divided against itself will fall."* Selwyn Hughes continues, "Where I was brought up in Wales, a man built himself a house on the top of a high hill – a house with a wonderful view. Altogether it had 4 living rooms, 2 kitchens, 6 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms.

But the man could not get along with his wife, and they lived apart, each occupying different rooms. When people drove past, they said, "What a magnificent house, but actually, it was a magnificent misery.

It stood as a house, but it could not stand as a home. It was a monument to loneliness. Our life will be like that too, if there is conflict or inner division.

"Blessed are the pure in heart..." In Greek the word, "pure" is translated as *katharos*, and has different meanings. It can mean being pure in a physical way – for example, clothes that are clean. It can also mean without blemish or without alloy – for example pure gold or silver.

In the Old Testament, however, it means ceremonial purity or ritual observance, in other words, the way that Jews understood purity. But it could also mean a state of mind or the heart. *"Blessed are the pure in heart."* To Jesus it is the thoughts of our hearts that matter above all.

An orthodox Jew may be arrogant and proud and have bitterness in his soul, but he felt that as long as he observed all the details of the law, he was pure. From Jesus' point of view, even if someone observed all the outward details of the ceremonial law, they would not be pure, unless their hearts were right.

As we thought about at the beginning of this sermon, this is the most demanding of all the beatitudes, because it means an honest self-examination, and this may be something we do not wish to do.

*"Blessed are the pure in heart,"* means blessed are those whose thoughts and hearts are genuine and sincere. None of us can claim to have absolutely pure motives all of the time, and therefore this beatitude makes us aware of our own sin, and we have to confess this to God in prayer.

But, when we have confessed our sins, and our hearts are cleansed and pure, then we see God in a new way. He can see him in everything, and can trace his hand everywhere.

*"Blessed are the pure in heart."* Nothing strengthens us like a pure heart. As Christians, we see God in nature, in the events of history, on the pages of the Bible. It also means that we can face whatever life throws at us – this does not mean we will never face disappointment, hurt, grief or pain – but when we have God in our hearts, we have everything,  
Amen.

**Hymn** *"I the Lord of sea and sky"*

**Prayer**

Let us pray,

O God our Loving Father, we thank you that in the changing circumstances of our lives over these past months, you are a God that we can depend upon – you are always faithful, always true, always loving and always forgiving.

Even although there are times when we feel you are hidden from us, you are constantly at work – in our daily lives, in our Church and in the world.

Whether you are seen or unseen, recognised or unrecognised, appreciated or taken for granted, you are moving through your Spirit striving to build your kingdom and fulfil your will.

Living God,

we bring before you now, those for whom events in the world, and in their personal lives, seem to deny your love – those who are confronted with a natural disaster, those who have to live in places where there is violence, especially in parts of the United States of America in the struggle for racial equality. We pray for those who suffer and those who are terminally ill, and those who see the apparent victory of evil.

Compassionate God,

we bring before you now, all those we know who are in special need of prayer this morning – those who have been bereaved, those who are ill at home or in hospital, and we ask your blessing on Anne McDonald in Ayr Hospital.

We ask your blessing on Newton Wallacetown Church, giving thanks for all those who have spent so much time preparing for the reopening of the church on Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> September. Be close to everyone attending worship on that day.

Lord God, teach us to be open to receive a new heart and a new spirit from you, as you promised in the days of the prophet Ezekiel. As we sang, break our hearts of stone, so that others may see your love shining out through each and every one of us.

This we pray through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord,  
Amen.

**Hymn** “Glorious things of thee are spoken” with the New Scottish Hymns Band.

### **Benediction**

*And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all, this day and forevermore.*

*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 (now in Berelands)	Mrs Anne McDonald (back in hospital)
Mrs Irene Gibson	Mrs Maude Smillie
Mrs Rae Beattie	Mrs Jeanette Burns
Mr Alasdair Wham	Mrs May Wilkinson
Mrs Betty McPherson	Mrs Ann Shaw
Mrs Anna Irving	Mrs Heather McLeod
Mrs Catherine MacDonald	Mrs Maie Dickie
Mrs Isa Lawrie	Mrs Jean McCamly

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](mailto:sheenahunter@hotmail.com)

**Happy news!** Our warm congratulations go this morning to Steven and Margaret-Anne McTurk who have become grandparents for the first time. Baby Ellie was born on Friday in America.

**Difficult times** While these are times of worry and hardship for many people, the Church is also struggling financially. If you are able, we would be most grateful if you would consider making an extra donation (according to means) to help cover ongoing bills etc.. Please contact Janis Meredith whose details are on page 8. Anyone wishing to donate to Ayr: Newton Wallacetown Church online can use this link:- <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2020/support-your-local-church-with-our-new-online-donations-system> Thank you. *John Bell*

**Salvation Army Foodbank** A big thank you to all who have donated in the past few months. Please note that donations will be accepted today 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.

**Online Donations** Do you shop online? If you do please remember that you can raise donations for the church at no extra cost to yourself. All you have to do is go to <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/> and register Newton Wallacetown Church of Scotland as your charity, then shop at the many different retailers who donate through the site. Remember though, that you have to go to the retailer through easyfundraising.

You can also raise donations when you shop at Amazon. Instead of shopping at the usual site go to <https://smile.amazon.co.uk/> and register Ayr: Newton Wallacetown Church of Scotland as your charity and the business will make a donation to the church on qualifying purchases.

**Birthdays** Our best wishes for a very Happy Birthday go this week to each of the undernoted ladies:-



**7<sup>th</sup> September** Esther Brooks and Betty Kelly

**8<sup>th</sup> September** Fiona Jackson

**13<sup>th</sup> September** Joyce McAnespie and Gina McKnight

**Can YOU help?** We are looking for someone to be NWC's contact with Nkhata Bay Church in Malawi. This is open to all members of the congregation. If you are interested, please speak to Rev. Rona Young or John Bell in the first instance.

**Remember** **Streaming of our morning service** conducted this week by Rev. Rona Young and next week by Gary McCleary will commence at **11.00am** then our **prayer time** starts at **12.30pm** with the Lord's Prayer followed by personal prayers. This helps bring us together to reach out to him in prayer while we are distancing physically.

Blest are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see our God,  
The secret of the Lord is theirs,  
Their soul is Christ's abode.

Still to the lowly soul  
He doth himself impart,  
And for his dwelling and his throne  
Chooseth the pure in heart.

Lord, we thy presence seek;  
May ours this blessing be;  
Give us a pure and lowly heart,  
A temple meet for thee.

**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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