

Encouraging YOU to know JESUS

God is speaking. Are you listening?

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.

The Minister's Message

Reflection "Confidence in God"

How can God allow a pandemic? How can God allow stabbings to take place – and violence and riots and natural disasters? Why are so many people starving? Why do some people die from cancer and others do not? The list could go on and on.

Dr M. Scott Peck opens his book entitled, *"The Road Less Travelled"* with the words, *"Life is difficult. This a great truth, because once we truly see this truth, we transcend it."*

Life is difficult – I am sure that all of you reading these words would agree. Once we accept the fact that life is difficult, and the mystery of why suffering will never be fully solved in this life, then we will stop demanding an answer and begin to move on with life.

Christians look at disasters or suffering in different ways. One way is to close their eyes and pretend that the tremendous problems are not there. But integrity requires that we face whatever is true. Reality is grim – innocent children are abused, starved and massacred, and countless forms of atrocity are carried out all over the world every day.

We must not close our eyes to these facts and pretend they are not true because they appear to contradict the concept of God's goodness. We have to be willing to look at these things, unpleasant and horrible though they may be, and allow ourselves to be truly shocked by them. When we face life honestly, and allow ourselves to be shaken by what we see, then, and only then, just like Job, are we ready for God to speak to us.

Bible reading (1) Job : 1 – 3

1 In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job. This man was blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil. 2 He had seven sons and three daughters, 3 and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants. He was the greatest man among all the people of the East.

Job appears to have a perfect life, with a perfect family and a perfect faith. But he loses everything – his property, his livestock, his family and then his own health, as boils and sores cover his whole body.

At first, he says very little about the difficulties and he refuses to take his wife's advice and curse God. Then his three friends try to convince him that his troubles are his own fault.

However, later he begins to face the reality of what has happened to him and declares that, if only he could have an interview with God, he would tell him what exactly he thought of him. It was when he faced his hardships, recognised how he really felt and admitted it, that God came to him and spoke to him.

We are never to be afraid of admitting that what we see around us doesn't match up with what we know about the character of God. Not to face the realities of life, for fear that it might turn us against God, is completely wrong.

We are to face difficult problems, because it is only when we do so, that we are ready to hear God speak. We are afraid that we might hear something that would shake our faith in God so we might prefer to ignore the truth.

When Job faced the reality of his situation and how he really felt, then he was ready for God to speak. We read the first part of God's reply:

Bible reading (2) Job 38: 1 – 7

The LORD speaks

1 Then the LORD spoke to Job out of the storm. He said:

2 'Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?

3 Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me.

4 Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. 5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?

6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone –

7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?'

Verse 1, "*Then the Lord answered Job out of a storm.*" In the Authorised Version, the word "*whirlwind*" is used. God takes Job on a whirlwind view of the creation of the world, he takes Job out of his cycle of grief to see the world from God's point of view. His reply to Job lasts for four chapters, and although God does not speak about Job's situation or answer his questions, Job understands that God knows what he is doing.

Oswald Chambers, a Christian writer evangelist and author who was born in the late 19th century said: "*Life is more tragic than orderly.*" Chambers knew that, unless Christians are willing to accept this truth, they will be plagued with inner *oughts* and *shoulds* that lead them down the wrong road. They will find themselves saying, "I *ought* not to be like this..." or "Things *should* be different..." and this way of thinking leads to frustration and anger.

The Fall has turned this beautiful world into a place where there are accidents, disasters and suffering. There is nothing wrong with wishing things were different, but if we *demand* they are different, then we will end up feeling very frustrated.

As Scott Peck says, life is difficult, and although prayer does move God to act supernaturally in some situations, life will go on being more "*tragic than orderly*" until Christ returns and finalises his plans for this fallen planet.

This is reality, and true faith is not built on an illusion but upon reality. We may not like the way things are in this world but, to avoid facing them because they don't match up with what we know about God is wrong. It is when we face up to the reality of our own life that we are ready for God to speak to us.

I know there are people who wonder why God does not answer their prayers. This morning, I hope that we still have confidence in God, even although there are questions in our lives to which we do not know the answer.

In the last verse of the hymn MP 258: *"I am trusting Thee, Lord Jesus"* are the words:

*"I am trusting thee Lord Jesus,
never let me fall;
I am trusting thee for ever
and for all."*

Are these words true for you?

Amen.

Prayer

Let us pray,

Loving Father,

when we think of how you have made a home in each of our hearts, and yet you created the whole universe, our hearts are full of praise and wonder.

Lord God, you are all-powerful, you are love, you are everlasting and you are unchanging and yet you are a kind, gentle and generous God. We praise, honour and adore you.

And above all, Lord God, we thank you that you sent Jesus into the world to save us by dying for our sins. You raised him from the dead to show us that there is indeed life after death.

Eternal and ever-blessed God,

We pray for the policeman and others in hospital after the stabbing incident in the hotel in Glasgow on Friday afternoon. Bless their families at this difficult time and be with all those who were shocked by what took place.

Lord God, on the Sunday after Armed Forces Day, we pray for all those who serve in the Armed Forces in different parts of the world. We give thanks that they are also always ready to respond to any emergency, especially during this pandemic.

Living God,

we pray now for our country slowly coming out of lockdown, and we rejoice to know that many of the restrictions are easing, although there are still great risks to our health.

Living God, we pray for our world, where there are countless people, especially in South America and in Asia, dying from Covid-19. We hear on the news every day, Lord, about more and people being made redundant. We pray for all those struggling financially because of the virus, and for all the people who have to rely on food banks.

Compassionate God,

we ask your blessing on Newton Wallacetown Church, and we bring before you our concern for all those who are ill in body, mind or spirit at this time. We pray those in hospital, those home for hospital and those worried about a loved one's health. Bless too those anxious or depressed this morning.

Loving God,

we pray that, like Job, we are able to put our trust in you, whatever is happening in our lives at the present moment.

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 Ann Shaw	Mrs Margaret Burgess
Mrs Jeanette Steel	Mr John Cassells
Mrs Christine Martin	Mrs Edith Gray
Mrs Aileen Alexander	Mr James Alexander
Mrs Heather McLeod	Mrs May Wilkinson
Mrs Betty McPherson	Mrs Jessie Rennie
Mrs Ellise Wilson	Mrs Alison Wilson
Mrs Anna Irving	Mrs Mary Ferguson
Mrs Catherine McDonald	Mrs Helen McGill

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.

Thank you Staff at Newton Primary School would like to thank the 7th Ayr Boys Brigade Company for the kind donation of sunflower seeds for the children.
Nicola Killick

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 5. 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 on past Sunday afternoons. Please note that donations will be accepted between **2.00** and **3.30pm**. 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.

Everything is distributed to those in need in our area and to Newton Primary School which is also a centre for collection for other schools with vulnerable families.

Birthdays This week, we wish a very Happy Birthday to the following:-

30th June Pamela Weir and **2nd July Aiden Coverdale**



Remember Streaming of our morning service conducted this week by Pauline Johnston and next week by Rev. Rona Young 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. Please join us for the service if you can and take part in the prayer time which many are finding valuable and some find comfort.



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