

Call to Worship

As we begin our worship these words, from the First Letter of John, are for our thinking this morning: “Consider how great is the love which the Father has bestowed on us in calling us his children!” (1 John 3:1)

Hymn – King of Kings, Majesty,

Prayer of Adoration & Praise

We clear our heads, we still our hearts and we come before God in prayer, let us pray.

Almighty and Loving God, as we gather to worship you this morning, we praise you for the assurance we have that you are always with us. That in you we find help and strength in times of trouble, that whatever we face you will always be there willing to reach out and help us.

We praise you for the constancy of your love, new every morning. For your handiwork in creation, the miracle of life in its infinite variety, and the beauty and wonder of the world around us.

We praise you for all you have done for us in Jesus Christ, opening, through him, a way for us to know you better, revealing something of your greatness and your goodness, filling our lives to overflowing with your unfailing love.

Father, you call us to go out into the world. To share our faith and to show your love. You call us to go out in the name of Jesus, to make known his name and make real his presence. You call us to go out through the power of your Spirit, to live for you and for others.

Forgive us Father that so often we come to you and then we fail to go for you. Forgive us that so easily we turn in on ourselves and away from others. Forgive us that having received so much we give back to you so little. Restore us through the love of Christ and remake us in your likeness.

Gracious and Loving God, accept now our worship. Accept our words, our songs, our readings, and our thoughts. Open our hearts to your sovereign presence Father, so that we may be filled with an ever-deeper sense of wonder, a greater feeling of awe and a richer understanding of your purpose for us and for the entire world.

For all this we ask in Jesus' name, who taught us when we pray together to say; Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive others that sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

All Age Talk

Hymn CH4 180 – Give thanks with a grateful heart,

Readings: Exodus 16: 1 – 21

The Manna and the Quails

¹The whole Israelite community set out from Elim, and on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left Egypt, they came to the desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai. ²There in the desert they all complained to Moses and Aaron ³and said to them, “We wish that the LORD had killed us in Egypt. There we could at least sit down and eat meat and as much other food as we wanted. But you have brought us out into this desert to starve us all to death.”

⁴The LORD said to Moses, “Now I am going to make food rain down from the sky for all of you. The people must go out every day and gather enough for that day. In this way I can test them to find out if they will follow my instructions. ⁵On the sixth day they are to bring in twice as much as usual and prepare it.”

⁶So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, “This evening you will know that it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt. ⁷In the morning you will see the dazzling light of the LORD's presence. He has heard your complaints against him

— yes, against him, because we are only carrying out his instructions.”⁸ Then Moses said, “It is the LORD who will give you meat to eat in the evening and as much bread as you want in the morning, because he has heard how much you have complained against him. When you complain against us, you are really complaining against the LORD.”

⁹Moses said to Aaron, “Tell the whole community to come and stand before the LORD, because he has heard their complaints.”¹⁰ As Aaron spoke to the whole community, they turned towards the desert, and suddenly the dazzling light of the LORD appeared in a cloud.¹¹ The LORD said to Moses,¹² “I have heard the complaints of the Israelites. Tell them that at twilight they will have meat to eat, and in the morning they will have all the bread they want. Then they will know that I, the LORD, am their God.”

¹³In the evening a large flock of quails flew in, enough to cover the camp, and in the morning there was dew all round the camp.¹⁴ When the dew evaporated, there was something thin and flaky on the surface of the desert. It was as delicate as frost.¹⁵ When the Israelites saw it, they didn't know what it was and asked each other, “What is it?”

Moses said to them, “This is the food that the LORD has given you to eat.¹⁶ The LORD has commanded that each of you is to gather as much of it as he needs, two litres for each member of his household.”

¹⁷The Israelites did this, some gathering more, others less.¹⁸ When they measured it, those who gathered much did not have too much, and those who gathered less did not have too little. Each had gathered just what he needed.¹⁹ Moses said to them, “No one is to keep any of it for tomorrow.”²⁰ But some of them did not listen to Moses and saved part of it. The next morning it was full of worms and smelt rotten, and Moses was angry with them.²¹ Every morning each one gathered as much as he needed; and when the sun grew hot, what was left on the ground melted.

2 Corinthians 8: 10 - 15

¹⁰My opinion is that it is better for you to finish now what you began last year. You were the first, not only to act, but also to be willing to act. ¹¹On with it, then, and finish the job! Be as eager to finish it as you were to plan it, and do it with what you now have. ¹²If you are eager to give, God will accept your gift on the basis of what you have to give, not on what you haven't.

¹³⁻¹⁴I am not trying to relieve others by putting a burden on you; but since you have plenty at this time, it is only fair that you should help those who are in need. Then, when you are in need and they have plenty, they will help you. In this way both are treated equally. ¹⁵As the scripture says, "The one who gathered much did not have too much, and the one who gathered little did not have too little."

Hymn CH4 97 – O God, you search me and you know me.

Sermon – 'Fair Shares'

If you are a parent, or grandparent, of two or more children, I am sure you will have heard on more than one occasion the following phrase: *'It's not fair!'* 'It's not fair' – we never like others to have more than we do and in some households that meant that one child cut the cake, whilst the other decided which piece they would have. In some families it would take quite a while to cut the cake exactly in half to ensure that all 'interested parties' got a fair share.

Another bone of contention, you may have come across, is the child who always promises to do something but never quite gets round to doing what they have promised. They never got round to tidying their bedroom. Setting the table for dinner or helping with the dishes. The opposite of this is the child who argues, slams the door behind them and shouts: *'IT'S NOT FAIR!!'* but then goes and gets on with the chore they have been asked to do.

Now, as we continue our short look at the Apostle Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, we find that Paul is tackling both kinds of dispute in today's reading. He is talking about fair shares and doing what you said you would or putting your words into action.

A fair share is a difficult issue in the Bible. God does not promise equality, but the Bible does include a lot about the needs of the poor and the special place they have in God's heart. It also warns against love of money and greed. Within this world there will always be inequality, but it is the responsibility of us who call ourselves Christians to use what we are blessed with responsibly, to share with those who are in need and to include decisions about money as part of our outworking of our faith.

Money is a spiritual issue, and we will be accountable, not just for what we give, but for all we have been blessed with in this life and how we have used it. We are accountable for how we have 'cut the cake' that we have been given. Yet it is also apparent that the Christian life is different to the world's economy.

This is illustrated in the way that Paul's word can be related to today's reading from the Old Testament Book of the Exodus. The story of the manna in the desert reinforces Paul's principle in verse 13 where he talks of the need for a fair sharing with others. It is an economy of God's abundance as the gift of manna is given to feed the people in the desert.

Those greedy enough to attempt to collect too much cannot hold on to their surplus overnight. Those who could not collect enough find to their surprise that they have sufficient to eat. The day before the Sabbath, the Israelites are told to trust God and the manna will not rot. Through God's grace and the people's faith there will be enough for the people to eat.

How will we respond collectively and individually to the knowledge that all we have is a gracious gift from God and not based on our own efforts? Let me try and answer my own by making a comparison between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. The Dead Sea, as the name suggests, has no life in it at all. You can float in it – sitting up because it is so salty. The Sea of Galilee teems with life – the polar opposite of the Dead Sea – except they are both fed by the same river.

The only difference between them is that the water is allowed to flow out of the Sea of Galilee. When you and I try to hold on to all that we have been blessed

with, we will find that the blessing begins to fade away. A hand that is constantly clenched around its possessions cannot receive anything else.

Surely, we must be channels of Grace and not pools of standing water? Why, well standing water quickly becomes stagnant water. We can all share in God's blessing of the world if we choose to become a part of his action, like a channel can water a far larger area of land in the desert than a pool, so crops can grow and flourish.

However, this also means being prepared to share. It means accepting the principle of fair shares; voluntarily and joyful sharing what we have in order that others benefit, and God is glorified within the church and the world.

Sounds simple doesn't it. Yet, the theologian Martin Luther once said that there are three necessary conversions that a Christian must go through first. The first of these is the heart, the second is the head and the third is the purse. Let me stress that the need of the church for financial support is only half of the story. Our need to give is greater than the need of the church to receive our gifts. For giving is an invitation to invest in God's economy of giving and receiving.

To be caught up in the flow of God's gracious giving should be an exciting experience, the equivalent of going white water rafting. Yes, we could stay at the side of the river and paddle hard, but we could paddle out into the flow of the water and be taken by its power and use our skills, our talents, to navigate the river and enjoy the experience. There is a blessing in giving that we can only find when we leave the safety of the riverbank and get caught in the flow.

Now, if giving is an invitation, it is also a challenge. It is not a challenge because it asks hard questions of how much we should give away, but because, it asks much harder questions about how much we keep and how we spend it. We are back at the question of how we cut the cake. To give more to the church means that there will be less for us. I suppose it is like our decision to give the first 'slice' of the week – Sunday morning – to God. It does not always feel like a sacrifice of thanks and praise to give the first part of our week in worship

because we get used to it, and we fit in those tasks that others do on a Sunday morning over the rest of the week.

The same will be true of our giving and our living if we dedicate it all to God – as the Macedonians, from the first half of 2nd Corinthians, chapter 8 did, and think through our lifestyle and spending as well as our giving. The seductive nature of money and possessions means that we will probably never be completely comfortable with questions about our lifestyle and our spending.

Finally, for us to want to give to God's work, we need to be convinced it is worth giving too. We need to be aware of all that is going on and both the financial needs and the amazing work being done by our church and other churches within the Church of Scotland. With the creation of a new Presbytery Mission Plan, forthcoming, we need to think and pray about relationships, within our church, within our Presbytery, and most important our relationship with God.

How much do I receive from this Gracious God, and how much do I want to identify with Him, His church, and His work? Yes, giving is a part of our commitment, but it an expression of commitment and not a substitute for it. This week I want to encourage us all to take the time to think through where we are in our lives, where we want to be and how Eastwood might help us in that journey.

The second issue that Paul address is putting our promises into action. It was no good the Corinthians being full of good intentions – they had to get on with fulfilling them. The Letter of James puts it very well: '*we are encouraged to put faith into action.*' It is no good sitting in the church building or sitting at home watching the livestream or later in week on demand, thinking about being streams of living water full of Grace and God's generosity if, when we either go home or finish watching, we do not do anything about it! Let us follow the example of the Macedonians who really put faith into action, who trusted God and who delivered on their promises.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Hymn CH4 374 – From heaven you came, helpless babe

Prayer for Ourselves and Others

We unite our hearts again in prayer, let us pray.

Gracious God, we thank you that you are a God who gives to us and goes on giving, day after day after day. A God who shared our humanity so that we might share in your eternity. Who offered your own Son so that we might become your children. Who was ready to die for us so that we might live for you.

Thank you, Father, for all that you have given us and now in return we bring you our offering for you to use in the work of and for the advancement of your Kingdom.

Almighty God, our Loving Heavenly Father, it truly is an amazing thought that the God who created the universe, this planet and all within it just by speaking is the God who stoops down low to be closer to us that the air we feel on our faces and this morning we want to thank you.

We want to thank you for the love and the grace with which you sustain and renew the earth day by day. We rejoice today to be here in your house, to be here in your presence. We remember how Jesus rejoiced to worship in the Synagogue. We remember too how he cleared the Temple so that all people could come and worship you.

Father, every time we think of you, we are filled with thankfulness. Every time we think of Jesus, we want to say thank you. Thank you, that he came. Thank you, that he comes. Thank you, that he died. Thank you, that he was raised again. Thank you, that he has promised to be with us always.

Wonderful God, through your help may we always look to Jesus. As by looking to Jesus, we can know you better.

Yet Father, our prayers are not just for ourselves. This morning we pray for those who are filled with doubt and despair, for those whose hopes have been crushed

and whose joy has been lost. For those whose lives have been damaged by the attitude of others and for those who are finding it hard to begin again. May the riches of your grace hold and heal them.

We pray for those who are hungry and starving; for those who are suffering because they cannot grow crops or because of war or national tension or natural disaster. May the riches of your grace bring peace and wholeness to all people.

Father, in this moment, we also pray for those known personally to us. We pray for our loved ones, our friends, and our neighbours. We pray for those we know whose lives are filled with many joys and for those whose lives are filled with many pains.

We pray for those unable to join us at Church today and we also think of those we know who are ill at home, in hospital or in a hospice. May all whom we name before you Father, feel your gracious presence with them...

Gracious and Loving God, the Lord of all eternity, you hold all souls in life, the dead as well as the living are in your care. We thank you for your people of every age and place who believed and followed you and have entered the joy of your heavenly presence.

Inspire us by their example, encourage us by their fellowship, and bring us with them at the last into glory everlasting. Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, in your name we pray. Amen.

Hymn CH4 468 – O Jesus, I have promised

Benediction

God has shared His Gift of Grace with us. Now may we share what we have received with others. So, as we go now, may the Blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Spirit rest upon you and all whom you love this day and always. Amen.

Recessional Song – May God's blessing surround you each day