

New Kilpatrick

Podcast

Luke 15:11-32

9th August 2020

Welcome

Hello and welcome to New Kilpatrick's podcast where we welcome members from Cairns church in Milngavie along with a number of folk from a variety of places. If you are listening by phone or online welcome. I'm Roddy Hamilton and I share this service with Jeanette Peel our probationary Assistant.

We're finding our way in the world again. It's a place the church is always meant to be, however we tend to settle down where we are and Covid has made us sit up and travel quite a bit in how we tell our stories, and be God's People. So welcome to the journey where we join the prodigal son in his rise and fall and rise again.

Centring Prayer

We gather our hearts and minds
And bring ourselves into your presence
A time to be still
To reflect
Like the younger brother
To be open and ready
To hear your voice
Call out to us
From deep within
Just as the Father did

Wherever we are
Whatever is happening
May we use this moment
To stop and just be
To find you in all things
In all of time
Deep within our soul
Calling out

And as we listen
We begin afresh
Each new day
With grace and compassion

As those before us have done

Hear us as we say The Lord's Prayer:

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.
And forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever.
Amen

Psalm

How lovely is your dwelling place,
O Lord of hosts!

My soul longs, indeed it faints
for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and my flesh sing for joy
to the living God.

Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at your altars, O Lord of hosts,
my King and my God.

Happy are those who live in your house,
ever singing your praise.

Happy are those whose strength is in you,
in whose heart are the highways to Zion.

For a day in your courts is better
than a thousand elsewhere.
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than live in the tents of wickedness.

For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
he bestows favour and honour.
No good thing does the Lord withhold
from those who walk uprightly.

O Lord of hosts,
happy is everyone who trusts in you.

Storytelling

He just left. That was it. The father didn't want to talk to the older son because his younger had just taken everything. Not off the shelves or out the bank. Those things didn't mean anything. The younger son had taken everything worth living for, for the old man. Asking for your inheritance before your father's demise was just wishing you dead and that's how he felt. The father was sitting at the window looking at the dust now settled on the path his son had taken. That was five years ago.

The younger son, if he had felt guilty, didn't any more. In fact he didn't feel much. He was numb to everything other than the moment he was living right now. It had been a fast life. It had been full on. He had everything he wanted, the wealth of fame and power and kudos. But that was years ago.

Now he found he was staring into swill with a finger drawing random shapes that meant nothing. He was lost, just as his infamy would describe him in the future. Lost to life, to others and to himself.

The foolishness, the embarrassment. He had been taken for a ride by everyone, including himself. He recognised nothing around him or anything about himself except the truth, life as he understood it, had ended.

But then, a dullest glimmer of something. It wasn't exactly hope but it was perhaps a way out. I'll negotiate my sonship for servanthood. That might work.

He tried. The words were on his lips. He had spoken most of them. But his father, who had just run to him, and he'd never seen that before, let him talk, but he wasn't listening because he had something to say that would trump even the best arguments of his son.

Welcome home. Son. Lost son, now found, son. Dead son, but now alive, son. Now we can party.

The older son, remember him. Well he felt no one had. Everyone was celebrating along with a fatted calf. That's not what's meant to happen the elder son was saying. That's against the rules said the ruler of the farm now. He was a book keeper and he felt someone had just cooked them. He was the only one who hadn't given up, hadn't lost

anything, hadn't been defeated, actually, hadn't died at some point in this story. He was still alive, and he felt, miserable.

Reflection

Here's an iconic story that we have all grown up with. Even Jesus grew up with a version of this story, because when you read it, does it not sound a lot like the story of Esau and Jacob? Stolen futures, tricking fathers, trickster younger brothers, for whom the deal they make, doesn't come off well.

The big turning moment is, of course, the moment the son, having played out in his head, a new deal with his father, to move from son to servant, confronts the old man, who doesn't give the idea even room to breath. It's a non-starter before it is even fully formed.

The father had a different deal to make, off the back of the original one that wounded and hurt him so completely.

The deal is: welcome home, son. I'm organising a party for you. I've been doing so since the moment you left. It's great that day has finally arrived.

Okay, that's not exactly what he said, but it is what's spoken in the spaces between the lines.

You see, the father seems to have no problem moving from forgiveness to celebration. there is no: now have you learned your lesson? Let's have some good behaviour from you now. There is no penitentiary between the son coming back and the party starting.

It's a picture of grace that shows how huge it is. Confession is not a transaction or a negotiation. Confession is actually the last gasp that admits all my past life is dead. All that got me to this point, is dead.

Robert Capon says: Confession is not a medicine leading to recovery. If we could recover... all we would need to do would be apologise, not confess. But, he says, we never recover. We die, and if we live again, it is not because the old parts of our life are rejigged back into live, but because some wholly other life takes up residence in our death. Grace.

In other words, it is a restart. A reboot. God replaces all that stuff that we confess about and starts again. It is as total as that.

It's not remedial. It's not a transaction, it's the last gasp that finally admits we're dead and only a new life will work from here on in. Resurrection.

And that is the gift of the father who knows that truth and can move from the sons confession to the celebration. Only in admitting he is dead to anything he would call life in the past, does the son have life.

The Church's gift to each of us, to our communities, to our neighbours, to ourselves. God's gift of forgiveness. It is how grace operates: that sets us free with brand new life. There's no going back because that back, doesn't exist any more.

Poem

As Cain was to Abel
Jacob to Esau
so was the Younger Son
to the Older Brother

The prodigal
took his former life
his father's standing
his brothers respect
on a journey
and lost it all

and in such a demise
among pigs and poverty
discovered he could not negotiate a new life for himself
but be resurrected
by a grace
which takes up residence
where death once dwelled

Prayers for Others

Loving God, with every action we take, there is a consequence, either for ourselves or for those around us. Sometimes we think we are doing the right thing for the right reason, but it is only after the event that we discover the truth. What we deem to be rightfully ours does not always bring the peace and comfort we thought possible.

Today, may we remember those who are in difficult family situations, where tensions exist and opportunities to work through things are impossible. For those who feel leaving home is the only option, sleeping on the streets or wherever they can, may we find ways to help them find their road to a new beginning, a new way of seeing things, and a chance to start again.

As children and school staff prepare to return to school, we know there will be anxieties about what lies ahead. The new way of being school, whether the first year of school or going into their final year before they too head off on a new adventure. A future planned out but not yet started. An old life rapidly changing into something new. Remind us to be there for them, to listen to their stories, to encourage and support them on this journey as they find their way.

Creator God, as we move through another month, may we be reminded of all the good things that we have in our lives and find the time and space to look for other opportunities that lift our spirits and remind us you are always with us.

Loving God, in our silence, we bring before you the prayers of those who are on our hearts and minds. We bring to you all those in difficult family situations and everyone who has no safe and warm place to sleep. We bring them to you now in the silence.

These are our prayers. Amen

Benediction

Go in peace
And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
the Love of God
and the Commonwealth of the Holy Spirit
Be with us all
Evermore
Amen

Announcements

Please take care of yourselves this week and keep safe. On the go all the time is New Kilpatrick church online at nkchurch.org.uk and Cairns at cairnchurch.org.uk. Please do meet us there if you can with all the zoom events from quiz nights to sofa surfers - if you don't know what that is, I'm not going to tell you, just join us on Thursdays at 7pm.

Zoomday School, YouTube videos, projects and news are all there too where you can subscribe you our weekly bulletin to keep you up to date. Please remember, you don't have to be a member to receive news. Covid has reminded us of many things but especially that the Body of Christ is not a club.

Talking of clubs, next time we meet a Syrophenician woman who is clearly not in the club, until she suggests the crumbs from the table say otherwise. See you next time.